prevalent opinion that he would have disorganized the whole state." [40]

These astounding revelations of the inner workings of the Federalist campaign are made by Troup with the most obvious approval of the tactics employed. No angry howl went up from the respectable and the great in the party councils. They were eminently right and proper. Yet these were the men who called Aaron Burr unprincipled, without virtue, ambitious, immoral, unscrupulous – indeed, every epithet within the resources of political and personal invective! Which proves merely that politics is an ancient institution, and has changed but little in the course of centuries.

Aaron Burr was defeated, and his Republican cohorts with him. It was a clean sweep, and Federalist hopes rose throughout the country. The most dangerous exponent of Republicanism in the nation had been crushed, seemingly for all time. New York was solidly in the Federalist column; only an earthquake could alter the political situation within the short course of a year. In 1800 there would be a Presidential election. John Adams – or Pinckney – was already as good as elected. No wonder they showered congratulations upon victorious Hamilton, Schuyler, Troup *et al.*

Nevertheless Aaron Burr was to furnish just that earthquake. For the last time they had underestimated his resources, his essential resilience of mind and body, his subtle brain and imperturbable aplomb, his inability to confess defeat. They were never to make that mistake again.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SECOND AMERICAN REVOLUTION

1. BURR DRAFTS A TICKET

THE Republicans – in the person of Jefferson – had fallen just short of ousting Adams from the Presidency in the election of 1796. During the four year interim they had been busy strengthening their organization by constant correspondence, agitation, and pamphleteering. The economic discontent had deepened and widened among those classes to whom the Republican appeal was especially directed – the farmer and the "proletariat" of the towns. Some of the shippers and merchants, even, had become amenable to their gospel – notably those whose ships and cargoes had been seized by the British on the high seas.

But these advantages were to a large extent offset by the unacknowledged war with France, to which Revolutionary country the Republicans had somewhat too enthusiastically hitched their wagon. From the offensive they were compelled to pass to the defensive; only Burr had been clever enough to avoid the issue by his stand on armaments.

The Federalists, however, had lost this tactical advantage by their advocacy and passage of the unpopular Alien and Sedition Acts. The Republicans quickly seized upon the issue that had been thus thrust into their hands. They raised lusty cries about the freedom of the press, the rights of personal liberty. They inveighed against the aristocrats and the moneyed classes who held the poor farmer in subjection. For the moment, the issue of France versus England was considerably soft-pedaled.

The Federalists, on the other hand, rallied *their* stalwarts – the holders of public securities, the investors in bank and industrial stocks, the large shipowners and manufacturers, the New England clergy. A campaign of unprecedented bitterness and hate was in the making. A war between alien nations could not have been attended with more vicious propaganda, with greater outbursts of passion. Federalist and Republican avoided each other in the street or at private gatherings; to the Republican, the Federalist was a monarchist, a swollen creature of money-bags not unlike the caricatured Wall Street banker of later years; to

the Federalist, his Republican opponent was a wild-eyed anarchist with blazing torch and the horns and hooves of a medieval devil. The first Revolution had been taken away from the Revolutionists. Another Revolution was now impending.

To understand the election of 1800 and its outcome, it is necessary to understand the election machinery of that period. There was no direct voting by the people of the nation for the officers of Government. There was not even a general election day. The electors in eleven of the States were chosen by the Legislatures of those States, meeting in joint session. In five only was there even the semblance of a popular, direct vote. Under the provisions of the Constitution then in force, the electors cast their votes for two men, without any distinction between them as to office. The candidate receiving the highest number of all the ballots cast became President, the candidate with the second highest number, Vice-President.

It is obvious, therefore, that the National campaign was actually determined in the local elections for members of the respective State Legislatures. Given a Federalist or Republican majority in the combined Houses of any Legislature, no matter how small, the vote of that majority would insure a unanimous delegation of electors from that State of the same political complexion. Hence the campaign had to be conducted on state, not national lines, and all energies were accordingly directed to the election of Legislatures of the proper political persuasion. But even this could not involve an appeal to the general population. The great mass of the people was notably disfranchised. The rigid property qualifications took care of that. A mere one-fifteenth of the adult male white population of the country were voters. Of these, still fewer exercised their franchise because of the difficulties in reaching the polls on the prescribed day, and because of the fact that the voting was non-secret. In those days of inflamed passions it required courage to vote in the public eye against the desires of the powerful and influential. It is well to keep in mind the picture of that stalwart merchant, Mr. John Murray, sacrificing an entire day in order to keep under his watchful eye the cartmen, his employees, when they came to the polls to vote.[1]

The Southern States were on the whole safely Republican; the New England section as safely Federalist. It was early realized that the election would turn in large measure on the electoral votes of New York, Pennsylvania and South Carolina. Of these the most important was New York. Unless that State could be carried, it would be almost impossible for either side to win.

The first States to vote for members of Legislature were New York, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Their elections took place early in the spring. By common consent New York was recognized as the all-important, the pivotal State. All eyes turned in breathless fascination to its internecine struggle for supremacy as the few, all too few, voters were marshaled and counted and marched to the polls.

The State was seemingly Federalist. Hamilton's forces had won overwhelmingly in the election of 1799; the old Legislature was Federalist and John Jay was Governor. All the power of patronage, of the massed hordes of office-holders, was on their side.

But the Republicans did not despair. Aaron Burr examined the situation and found reason for optimism. He had detached certain valuable men in the western counties from the Federalist ranks – Judge Peck and General German especially. He had friends in Orange County, Peter Van Gaasbeck and others, to whom his name was an inspiring slogan. The State outside New York City would be close in its division. Hence New York City would prove the decisive factor. It was true that he had been beaten in the last election, but that had been the result of certain local factors. He had learned his lesson from former errors.

The Republican leaders unanimously left complete charge of the New York campaign to Burr. They recognized in him a brilliant tactician, the one hope they had of carrying the State, and thereby carrying the nation. The Clintons and the Livingstons remained on the sidelines. Jefferson, sitting anxiously in Philadelphia, relied on him implicitly. In January, 1800, in the very earliest stages of the campaign, he wrote to Monroe expressing his confidence in the result "on the strength of advices." In March, he was informing Madison that the election was safe if New York City could be carried. This on the representations of Aaron Burr.[2]

The supreme struggle centered on New York City. Both parties put forth their utmost efforts. Hamilton, facing the most desperate fight of his career, was campaigning like a madman. The Federalists backed him solidly. But the whole brunt of the Republican attack rested on Burr. In the beginning he had very little support. The Clintons and the Livingstons were strangely lackadaisical. They appeared to be sulking in their tents. The situation called for every ounce of energy, every dram of Burr's much vaunted diplomacy and finesse.

His first move in the campaign was a tactical one. He did not put forth his list of candidates for the Assembly and the State Senate until the Federalists had published theirs. Much of his

strategy depended on the makeup of the Federalist ticket. Matthew L. Davis, Burr's lieutenant and future biographer, wrote to Gallatin on March 29, 1800, that "the Federalists have had a meeting and determined on their Senators; they have also appointed a committee to nominate suitable characters for the Assembly . . . Mr. Hamilton is very busy, more so than usual, and no exertions will be wanting on his part." But, continued Davis with justifiable pride, "fortunately, Mr. Hamilton will have at this election a most powerful opponent in Colonel Burr. This gentleman is exceedingly active; it is his opinion that the Republicans had better not publish a ticket or call a meeting until the Federalists have completed theirs. Mr. Burr is arranging matters in such a way as to bring into operation all the Republican interests." [3]

The event was to justify the brilliance of this strategy. For Hamilton committed a blunder. His blunder was conditioned chiefly on his secret malice towards John Adams, the titular head of the party. All *his* strategy was bottomed on the driving aim to unseat Adams for the Presidency and push his own ally, Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, of South Carolina, into the chair. To accomplish this, it was necessary, naturally, to elect a Federalist Legislature in New York, but it was equally necessary to place in office men who would be amenable to his plans when it came to the choice of Presidential electors. Accordingly, he called a secret caucus of his most pliant followers and nominated a slate of mediocrities, of mere tools to his ambition; men who would vote as he cracked the whip. It followed that there could be no outstanding Federalists on such a ticket; *they* would not have lent themselves readily to such work.

The caucus and the ensuing nominations were clothed with the utmost secrecy. But Burr had been waiting patiently for just this moment. Not for nothing had he been chosen time and again for Intelligence Service during the Revolution. As part of his political strategy he had built up an efficient espionage system, the details of which are still veiled in obscurity, but whose results savored of black magic to his befuddled opponents.

John Adams was to relate with considerable complacency — though it eventually cost him the election — how Hamilton had "fixed upon a list of his own friends, people of little weight or consideration in the city or the country. Burr, who had friends in all circles, had a copy of this list brought to him immediately. He read it over, with great gravity folded it up, put it in his pocket, and, without uttering another word said, 'Now I have him all hollow.'" This story, Adams averred, he had received from personal witnesses.[4]

Burr proceeded at once to stage the next step in his planned strategy. This was to oppose to the Federalist mediocrities a Republican ticket of men of such outstanding reputation that, on the basis of personalities alone, the voters must perforce exercise their franchise in behalf of the Republicans. But this was easier said than done.

The New York Republican party was not a welded unit, an organization united in a common cause. It was split into factions, each ambitious in its own right and jealously suspicious of all the others. The Clintons had dominated the scene for many years; they feared now Burr's rise to a commanding position. Between them and the Livingstons, recent converts to the Republican gospel, there existed a feud of long standing and a clash of political ambitions. There was also a host of other factions, swayed by local issues and mutual animosities. Yet to win the election, it was necessary to obliterate these personal and political feuds, and weld all contending factions into a solid and powerful fighting unit. Worse still, it was necessary to persuade, cajole or threaten the leaders, the great heads, the sulkers in their tents, to come forth and stand as candidates for seats in the lowly Legislature. Burr had stooped to conquer in 1797, but he was a *professional* politician. These others were not. It was a seemingly impossible task that he had undertaken.

Burr nevertheless had determined on his course. In the management of men and factions he had never risen to greater heights; perhaps in American history there has been no comparable accomplishment. He called into play all the resources of his remarkably attractive personality, of his powers of persuasion, of his political acumen and resourcefulness. His ticket was already drawn. It consisted of the ablest men of the party, men whose names were clarion calls to victory. George Clinton, many times Governor of New York, General Horatio Gates, with the glamour of the Revolution still upon him, Brockholst Livingston, eminent lawyer and member of a mighty clan, Samuel Osgood, Postmaster-General during Washington's Administration and ex-member of Congress, John Swartwout, Burr's own lieutenant, Henry Rutgers, Elias Nexen, Thomas Storm, George Warner, Philip I. Arcularius, James Hunt and Ezekiel Robins, each man representing some interest or faction and of more than local prominence. Every branch of the Republican party was represented in this New York City ticket.

The problem now was to make them run. Many – the Clintons among them – considered the prospect, aside from other and more personal considerations, as hopeless. The Federalists were in the saddle in New York City, and could not be unseated. To the ignominy of running for petty office, would be added the greater ignominy of defeat. Burr was not to be denied, however. He saw each proposed candidate personally, exercised on him all the arts of which he alone was capable, argued of the greater patriotism, the eventual success of the cause to which they were all committed, made each man feel the subtle force of his flattery – that on him, and him alone, depended the success of the movement. They were obdurate, eying each other with dour suspicion, refusing to yield. Burr redoubled his blandishments, his arguments; organized committees that waited upon the stubborn gentlemen with additional pleas.

Finally, after superhuman efforts, Brockholst Livingston reluctantly agreed that, if George Clinton and Horatio Gates both ran with him on the ticket, he would not withhold his consent. With this opening breach in impregnable walls, Burr rushed to Gates. Gates was his personal friend and warm admirer.[5] After much argument, Gates finally yielded, conditioned, however, on Clinton's similar acceptance.

Everything now depended on the ex-Governor's attitude. Burr brought all his forces into play. He himself, and committees which he formed, literally camped on the obstinate old man's doorstep. He had here to contend with, among other motivations, an ineradicable jealousy of himself. Clinton had held the power in New York for a long time. Should the Republicans win this campaign, through the efforts of Aaron Burr, a new star would be in the ascendant. Finally, however, party pressure became too great to be borne. He yielded, grudgingly, to this extent, that his name might be used without his express disavowal, but that he would not campaign in his own behalf. He even went so far, according to Davis, who was a member of the committee, as to express certain very unflattering sentiments respecting Thomas Jefferson, the leader of the national ticket.[6]

Once the leaders had capitulated, the lesser fry hastened to follow suit. The ticket was complete. It was unfolded to Republican gaze at the house of J. Adams, Jr., on William Street. The surprised rank and file, who had known nothing of what was taking place behind the scenes, arose and cheered deliriously. The nominations were endorsed unanimously.

When the news broke on the startled Federalists, they were

dumfounded. Burr had kept his secrets well, for Hamilton had nothing like the organized espionage of his opponent. Here was a ticket composed of great names, of national figures, to which they had to oppose a group of men without reputation, without standing, known to all and sundry as Hamilton's personal henchmen. Hamilton himself was paralyzed. Then he swung into action. The Federalist press hysterically attacked Jefferson, Madison and Clinton as plotters of destruction, subverters of the Government. Unfortunately, Clinton was almost the only one of the *local* ticket amenable to such attacks. Livingston and Osgood had supported the Constitution, Gates had hardly dabbled in politics.[7]

2. Tammany Marches to the Polls

But Burr was not depending solely on the merits of the ticket he had evolved. For years he had been slowly but steadily employed in the forging of an irresistible political machine. Fundamentally, it was based upon a group of young men of ability and enthusiasm whom he had gathered around him after careful deliberation. The Swartwout family, John and Robert, and later, young Samuel; Matthew L. Davis, William P. Van Ness, talented and the wielder of a trenchant polemical pen, with his brothers, Peter and John, Theodorus Bailey, John Prevost, his stepson, David Gelston, and others. A group fired with fanatical loyalty and devotion for their Chief, captivated by his fascination, brilliance and unfeigned interest in their welfare, a group that acted and fought with formidable unanimity. These were the young men at whom the Federalists, and later the Republicans themselves, directed their sneers as the "little band," the "Myrmidons," and who were to be called proudly by Theodosia "the Tenth Legion."

There was also another group, much larger in numbers, and sprawling at first with considerable looseness over the city, whose political potentialities Aaron Burr was the first to discover. This was the Society of St. Tammany, or Columbian Order, founded in 1789 by William Mooney, an ex-soldier, who kept a small upholstery-shop at 23 Nassau Street. It was the normal successor to certain organizations of the Revolutionary era – the Sons of Liberty and the Sons of St. Tammany – groups of mechanics, laborers, and the dispossessed generally, who espoused independence and a vigorous war, and decried and ridiculed opposing Tory societies possessing the grandiose appellations of St. George, St. Andrew and St. David. These predecessors of Tammany dissolved

at the end of the war, only to re-form during the struggle over the Constitution. They had followed George Clinton in his first battles, but had disbanded again under the dissolving acid of Hamilton's victories.

William Mooney, however, a private during the Revolution, resented the emergence of a new order of aristocrats, the Society of the Cincinnati. This was composed of officers only, who proposed for themselves and their families hereditary membership and resplendent insignia, leaving the common soldiers who had fought the Revolution out in the cold, politically as well as socially. Hamilton became the President of the New York Chapter. Burr was also a member.

In protest, Mooney organized the Society of St. Tammany, with a mumbo-jumboism of Indian titles — Sachems, Grand Sachems, Sagamores, Scribes and Wiskinskies — utilizing all the secret ritual and outlandish forms dear to the American heart. The years were floral seasons, the months " moons "; there were tribes of the Eagle, Otter, Rattlesnake, Bear, Fox and Tiger (which last was to become synonymous with the Society); their meeting-place was called the Wigwam, and Barden's Tavern was their first place of assignation.[8]

Originally the Society was non-partisan in politics, but gradually it shifted to anti-Federalist sympathies. Its members endorsed the French Revolution, toasted " Liberty " and " Freedom," and evinced an unconcealed hatred for the aristocrats and those of monarchical tendencies, as well as a vaguer and more unformulated resentment of the possessing classes in general. The backbone of the Society's membership consisted of mechanics, artisans, laborers and cartmen.

But the Society was not a political force. Its membership considered the Wigwam in the main a social rendezvous, where nightly, after the day's arduous labors, the men gathered to smoke, drink ale, and swap stories and anecdotes of a kind. Fitz-Greene Halleck was to sing of them,

> " There's a barrel of porter at Tammany Hall,
> And the Bucktails are swigging it all night long."

Burr had long had his eye on this loose-bound Society of Tammany. He saw the enormous possibilities it held. As far back as 1796 he had set to work to make it his own. He never joined the Order; it is doubtful if he ever set foot within its smoky, odorous precincts. But he gradually achieved control, becoming in fact though not in name, its real leader, and thereby started Tammany

on the long road of political domination in the City of New York, a domination which has continued with but few interruptions to the present day. Mooney remained for a while the titular leader, but he was no more than a mere tool. Many of Burr's " little band," at his command, joined the Society of St. Tammany, in due time to become its Sachems and Grand Sachems, its prime movers: Davis, John and Robert Swartwout, John and William P. Van Ness, Isaac Pierson, John P. Haff, Jacob Barker, and others. " Burr was our chief," Davis acknowledged later.[9] Through his lieutenants Burr regulated the policies of Tammany, whipped its members into a fighting organization, marshaled them on election day to the polls in obedience to his orders. He was Tammany's first " Boss," the first of a long line. Yet he was not " one of the boys," in any sense of the phrase.

By 1798 the Society, under his powerful, if invisible domination, had entered upon its purely political phase. Its meeting-place was shifted to the " Long Room," kept as a tavern by Abraham Martling, an Ex-Sachem. The adherents of Burr, in the days of his disgrace, were to be called the " Martling Men." The Federalists, holding their noses, contemptuously termed the rendezvous " the Pig Pen." It was, in fact, a small, dark room in a shabby, one-story frame building.

Unfortunately, most of the Tammanyites were disfranchised by the existing property qualifications. Burr addressed himself to this problem and solved it by means of a clever scheme. Poor Republicans, propertyless and landless, clubbed together and purchased as joint tenants sufficient land to come within the law. The salient feature of a joint tenancy is that each participant therein, no matter how large the group, in law is the owner of the entire parcel. The substantial men of property who had originally placed their limitations in the Constitution against the rabble did not envisage the loophole through which Burr was to drive his massed cohorts to victory. Nor is it to be doubted that the wealthier Republicans, or the new Bank of the Manhattan Company, surreptitiously supplied the requisite funds for the purchases.

Burr's tactics in this respect were extended widely the following year. In November, 1801, 39 landless Republicans purchased jointly a house and plot of ground in the Fifth Ward, with the result that these additional votes turned the tide in the next Ward election. And in the Fourth Ward, a similar real-estate transaction at 50 Dey Street carried the day in the City Common Council. The Federalists howled " fraud " and their aldermen moved to

cast out the ballots as illegal. They had a majority of one. But Edward Livingston, Mayor of the City, was Republican, and his vote created a tie, an impasse, and complete nullification of Federalist efforts.[10]

Nor was this all. Burr still had not reached the end of his resources in this momentous election. He realized that finances, the backbone of a successful campaign, had never been placed upon a systematic basis. He organized committees to collect funds in a house-to-house canvass. He sent solicitors to the wealthier Republicans, bearing with them slips on which the proposed contributions were already listed – as determined by himself. He scanned his lists with care and attention. No one escaped. A certain rich man, noted for his parsimony, was down for $100. "Strike out his name," observed Burr. "You will not get the money, his exertions on our behalf will cease, and you will not even see him at the polls." He came across another name. This man was liberal, but notably lazy. "Double the amount of his contribution," Burr remarked, "and tell him no labor will be expected of him."[11] Mark Hanna was but to put Burr's methods into practice on a larger scale.

Burr did more. He card-indexed every voter in the city, his political history, his present disposition, his temperament, habits, state of health, and the efforts necessary to get him to the polls. He organized precinct and ward meetings, saw to it that speakers were in constant supply, spoke himself. Modern politics – the politics of localism whereby national majorities are compounded – was being born.

Meanwhile Burr himself was standing for the Assembly from Orange County, not from New York City. He had many friends in that county who could be relied on to put him through safely. It is claimed that the reason for this shift in his own candidacy was to permit him to devote his entire efforts to electioneering in New York. It is also possible that he thereby avoided the embarrassing issue of the Manhattan Bank which had helped defeat him the year before.

The polls in New York City opened on April 29th and closed May 1st. Political leaders of the entire country watched with fascination the drama of that election. Hamilton, seeing the handwriting on the wall, rode frenziedly on a white horse from poll to poll, haranguing the voters, declaiming in a twelfth-hour effort to turn the tide. Handbills flooded the city. The Republicans worked ceaselessly. Davis penned a hasty note to Gallatin at the height of the excitement. "This day he [Burr] has remained at

the polls of the Seventh ward ten hours without intermission. Pardon this hasty scrawl. I have not ate for fifteen hours."[12]

The polls closed at sunset. By late evening the result was known. The Republicans had swept their ticket into office by an average majority of 490. Burr's masterly generalship had been almost exclusively responsible for the result. Every one knew it, every one acknowledged the fact. The Republican Assemblymen and Senators from New York City were sufficient to create a Republican majority in the joint Houses. Burr had also been successful in Orange County. A unanimous Republican delegation of Presidential electors from New York State was assured.

An analysis of the vote in New York City discloses certain interesting sidelights on the fundamental makeup of the two parties. In order to vote for State Senators, it must be remembered, possession of freeholds of at least £100 in value was required. Necessarily, such voters were representative of the substantial, propertied classes, especially within city limits. Haight, the ranking Federalist candidate, received 1126 votes in New York City, as against 877 for Denning, the leader on the Republican list. But the outlying rural districts, where the farmers were, overcame this majority and elected the Republican.

For the Assembly, the property qualifications were substantially less, and Burr's methods of joint tenancy and ownership had made practically every Republican dweller in the city into a voter. Here George Clinton, the leading Republican candidate, received 3092 votes as against 2665 for Furma, the highest among the Federalists.[13] Wealth and commerce gravitated substantially to the Federalists, farmers and landless workers to the Republicans.

The news of the smashing New York victory was carried by swift expresses to Philadelphia, the seat of the Government. Wild exultation overcame the Republicans, while the Federalists sank into gloomy depression. Hamilton had let them down. The Senate was in session, but such was the confusion and hasty assemblage of party conclaves that the further transaction of business became impossible, and the Senate was compelled to adjourn.

In New York, Hamilton was stunned. He knew only too well what the result portended. The success of the Republicans nationally, the ousting of the Federalists from the seats of the mighty, his own eventual downfall as the leader of the party. The prospect appalled him. Ordinarily an intellectual machine of the first order, he gave way to one of his not infrequent emotional outbursts. He called a secret meeting of his followers and determined upon trickery to snatch back victory from defeat.

In his own handwriting, he sent Governor John Jay a most remarkable document. He proposed nothing more or less than the immediate convening of an extra session of the existing Legislature, which was Federalist in complexion. At this session a bill was to be jammed through, depriving the Legislature of the right to choose the Presidential electors, and placing such power in the hands of the people of the State by districts. Thereby, he stated, the impending debacle could be averted, and a respectable minority of electors chosen to vote for the Federalist candidates for President and Vice-President. " It is easy," he wrote, " to sacrifice the substantial interests of society by a strict adherence to ordinary rules . . . the scruples of delicacy and propriety, as relative to a common course of things, ought to yield to the extraordinary nature of the crisis." [14] An astounding proposition, especially from a man who never tired of accusing Burr of political chicanery and loose ethics. Hamilton once again had lost his head. An election had just been held, in accordance with law. The people had registered their convictions, knowing full well what issues were at stake. Hamilton was proposing now to defeat their will – *after* he and his party had formulated the rules. For his scheme was nothing more or less than that which Burr and Swartwout had legitimately advocated *prior* to the election, and which the Federalists themselves had defeated.[15] But then they had been certain of victory. It all depended on whose ox was gored.

To Jay's eternal credit, however, he made a notation on Hamilton's letter, " proposing a measure for party purposes, which I think it would not become me to adopt " and buried it among his private papers, where it was discovered after his death.[16]

Burr's spy system was still functioning with uncanny efficiency. The very next day after Hamilton's proposal was despatched, a copy of it appeared in a Republican newspaper. The public read it with incredulity. A Federalist editor, who had not been in on the secret caucus, denounced it in unmeasured language as a base slander, an infamous lie.

The new Legislature duly met, with a Republican majority of 22 on joint ballot, and elected 12 Republican Presidential electors from New York.

3. Clinton or Burr?

Burr's victory in New York turned all eyes upon him as a strong and powerful leader whose wishes must be consulted and heeded. The Republican party chiefs – the Senators, Congressmen, and

officials assembled in Philadelphia – were now compelled to consider him in any plans that might be adopted for the forthcoming election. Nominations for national office, as they are known today, were nonexistent. Candidates were agreed upon at informal discussions or caucuses of influential leaders, who proceeded to write to all their friends, urging the caucus choice upon them.

Immediately after the results of the New York election were known, the Republican members of Congress foregathered in Philadelphia to choose such informal candidates. It was obvious that Thomas Jefferson would be the choice for the Presidency. It was just as obvious that the Vice-Presidency must go to New York as the Northern stronghold of Republicanism.

But here the obvious ended, and disputes arose. Three possible candidates were suggested – George Clinton, Chancellor Livingston, and Aaron Burr – representatives of the three political factions in the State. Each had his ardent supporters. Davis wrote to Gallatin, a caucus member, pushing Burr's claims to the nomination. Clinton, he said, was old, infirm, and seemingly averse to further public life. As to Livingston, " there are objections more weighty." There was a definite prejudice against his name and family, and doubts as to his firmness and decision. " Colonel Burr," he concluded, " is therefore the most eligible character. Whether he would consent to stand I am totally ignorant," but " if he is not nominated, many of us will experience much chagrin and disappointment." [17]

Meanwhile Gallatin, in puzzlement, was writing his wife, that " the New York election has engrossed the whole attention of all of us, meaning by us Congress and the whole city. Exultation on our side is high; the other party are in low spirits." But the burning question now was, " Who is to be our Vice-President, Clinton or Burr? This is a serious question which I am delegated to make, and to which I must have an answer by Friday next. Remember this is important, and I have engaged to procure correct information of the wishes of the New York Republicans." [18]

This was the decision, then, at which the caucus had arrived – to permit the New Yorkers to decide for themselves. Gallatin was given the delicate task, and he promptly assigned it to James Nicholson, his father-in-law, and an influential politician in New York.

What happened in the course of this mission is shrouded in an after-envelopment of inky mystery. Several years later, when

Cheetham's charges flew thick and fast, and Van Ness as vigorously retorted, diametrically opposed stories were laid before the public, and the truth is still not fully understood.

But in May, 1800, all this was in the limbo of the future. Nicholson first met with various Republicans and then, in accordance with his instructions, sounded out both Clinton and Burr on the question of their candidacies. On May 7, 1800, he reported to Gallatin that "I have conversed with the two gentlemen mentioned in your letter. George Clinton, with whom I first spoke, declined." Clinton, in fact, "thinks Colonel Burr is the most suitable person and perhaps the only man. Such is also the opinion of all the Republicans in this quarter that I have conversed with; their confidence in A. B. is universal and unbounded. Mr. Burr, however, appeared averse to be the candidate. He seemed to think that no arrangment could be made which would be observed to the southward; alluding, as I understood, to the last election, in which he was certainly ill used by Virginia and North Carolina.

"I believe he may be induced to stand if assurances can be given that the Southern States will act fairly. . . . But his name must not be played the fool with."[19]

Burr had forgiven, but not forgotten. Virginia and the Southern States had knifed him in 1796; he wished for no repetition of that treachery now that the chances of election were particularly bright. This private communication of Nicholson to Gallatin requires careful consideration. Gallatin was his son-in-law, its contents confidential. He had no reason for stating anything but the truth. For one thing, he acknowledged that Burr's resentment against the South was justified. It must be remembered, moreover, that Gallatin was definitely attached to Jefferson, though at this time friendly with Burr.

More important, however, is Nicholson's account of what took place in his conferences with Clinton and Burr. Several years later, when the storm clouds swirled, and the political axes were sharpening for Burr, Nicholson was to change his story. But definite pressure had been brought to bear. It was political suicide for a politician to stand out against Jefferson and the Clintons, and immediately before his new version was carefully written down — never to be published during his lifetime, however — he had been appointed to Federal office by Jefferson, on the recommendation of De Witt Clinton.

This account purported to substantiate Cheetham's, and Clinton's narrative of the conferences, and to dispute the countercharges of Aristides (William P. Van Ness). As far as Nicholson

is concerned, the record must stand on the relative merits to be given these two documents.

As to Clinton, *his* statement also never saw the light of day. But he had furnished the material to Cheetham for his assertion that Burr had deliberately jockeyed him out of the nomination. In this communication, addressed to his nephew, De Witt Clinton, dated December 13, 1803, he declared, "I believe it can be ascertained beyond a doubt that our republican Friends in Congress were . . . in my favour in case I would consent to be held up as the Candidate for that Office and that it was only on my declension that Chancellor Livingston and Mr. Burr were to be proposed. To this effect Mr. Gallatin . . . wrote to his Father in law Commodore Nicholson, who shewed me his Letter and importuned me very earnestly to authorize him to express to Mr. Gallatin my consent."[20] But no such inference can be drawn from Gallatin's letter to his wife, dated May 6, 1800, previously quoted. Unfortunately Gallatin's own letter to Nicholson has been lost.

Clinton went on to say that at first he declined the nomination, but on further solicitation, "I finally agreed that in answering Mr. Gallatin's Letter he might mention that I was averse to engage in public life yet rather than that any danger should occur in the Election of President . . . I would so far consent as that my name might be used without any Contradiction on my part. It being understood however that if elected I would be at liberty to resign without giving umbrage to our Friends and he agreed to draught a Letter to Mr. Gallatin & shew it to me." On the face of it, this was a very strange decision to which Nicholson had assented. A Vice-Presidential candidate who refused to campaign for office, and who, if elected, would resign and leave the new Republican Government in a state of almost irremediable confusion! Nevertheless, according to Clinton's story, Nicholson returned the next day with the letter he had drafted to Gallatin, which Clinton thereupon read and approved. But, "when he left my House he went to Mr. Burr's where Mr. Swarthoudt [*sic*] and some others of Burr's Friends were, he disclosed to them the Business he had been on and shewed the Letter. On reading of it Mr. Burr was much agitated, declared he would have nothing more to do with the Business, That he could be Governor of the State whenever he pleased to be. This conduct alarmed Mr. Nicholson and to appeaze Mr. Burr and his Party he consented to alter the Letter to Mr. Gallatin to an unqualified declension on my part and by this means Mr. Burr's nomination was effected."

To which Nicholson, on December 26, 1803, two weeks later,

and over three years after the event, concurs in almost identical language. He adds, however, certain curious details as to the methods employed by Burr and his friends to persuade him to an alteration of the all-important letter to Gallatin, which, if true, speak volumes for Nicholson's incredible gullibility and Burr's even more incredibly clumsy tactics. For example – Burr is alleged to have rushed out of the room after he read Clinton's qualified consent to stand as a candidate, crying out "that he would not give up the certainty of being elected Govr to the uncertainty of being chosen V.P.," when, in fact, no proffer of the latter position had as yet been made to him. That he sent back two friends to Nicholson, pacing the room alone, to whom the bewildered politician again divulged the contents of the fatal letters. They read them, and "one of them declared with a determined Voice that Colo. Burr should accept and that he was obliged so to do upon principles." Whereupon they also left the room, only to return immediately with Burr, who "with apparent reluctance consented." [21]

An astonishing story, indeed, which Cheetham was to employ with telling effect when it was decided to read Burr out of the party. A story full of patent absurdities and contradictions, and not at all in accordance with earlier documentary material.

However, on the receipt of Nicholson's letter of May 7th, there was held, on May 11, 1800, "a very large meeting of Republicans, in which it was unanimously agreed to support Burr for Vice-President." [22] The ticket was complete. Thomas Jefferson of Virginia for President, and Aaron Burr of New York for Vice-President.

4. Hamilton Writes a Pamphlet

The campaign proceeded with new vigor. That same month New Hampshire and Massachusetts held their elections for Legislature, and the Republicans polled astonishing votes, though failing of absolute majorities. The Federalists were thoroughly disgruntled, and torn by internal dissensions. Hamilton and his closer friends were determined that this time, come what may, they would displace John Adams and exalt Pinckney in his stead. Not that this was an open or public avowal of intentions: Hamilton was burrowing secretly and in the dark. He wrote with feverish intensity to all his friends and those whom he felt he could influence, urging them to cast aside Adams and throw their weight to Pinckney. On May 8, 1800, when New York's vote was still in doubt, he wrote Sedgwick that New York, if Federalist, would not go for John Adams unless a firm pledge was given that Pinckney

would be equally supported in the Northern States, and ended significantly that "our welfare depends absolutely on a faithful adherence to the plan which has been adopted." [23]

On May 10th, in another communication to Sedgwick, he was even more open in his avowals. "For my individual part," he affirmed, "my mind is made up. I will never more be responsible for him [Adams] by my direct support, even though the consequences should be the election of *Jefferson*." [24] This, within three days after his letter to Governor Jay, in which he advocates the most unscrupulous measures on the ground that Jefferson's election meant the "overthrow of government," "revolution," "Bonaparte," "atheist in religion," and "fanatic in politics"!

John Adams became aware of Hamilton's machinations and exploded with wrath. There was no way he could get at Hamilton himself. But he proceeded to rid his Cabinet of Pickering, Secretary of State, McHenry, Secretary of War, and Wolcott, Secretary of Treasury; all friends and satellites of Hamilton. He had erred in not having taken this step long before. The damage was done.

Furious, Hamilton threw what little discretion he had left to the winds. The belated action of Adams was a declaration of war against himself. He promptly set himself to write a pamphlet – against the advice of his cooler-headed friends – in which he assailed the Administration and John Adams personally in the most intemperate language. Only on the repeated pleadings of his friends did he consent, albeit reluctantly, not to publish it anonymously to the world. Instead, it was agreed that Hamilton was to sign the pamphlet and that it was to be circulated privately among the leading Federalists for their consideration.

He forgot Burr, however, who had eyes and ears in the most secret councils of the enemy. The pamphlet had been sent to the editor of the New York *Gazette* to be printed, with due cautions as to secrecy. Somehow – the means employed has been the subject of several unsubstantiated versions – a copy of the printed pamphlet came into Burr's hands even before Hamilton received his own. And Burr promptly saw to it that it was printed, with appropriate fanfares, in the Republican *Aurora* and the New London *Bee*. It made a sensation. The Republicans pounced upon the damning pamphlet with infinite glee. The Federalists – those not of the immediate Hamilton persuasion – were shocked. Adams fumed. The party split wide open.

Now that New York was safely Republican, Burr turned his organizing talents to those New England States where elections were still to be held, notably in Connecticut and Rhode Island,

where he had a host of friends. Troup was still keeping Rufus King informed of his movements and getting no satisfaction out of them. " Burr," he wrote in August, " whom Mr. Church calls our chief consul, is in very high glee. He entertains much company & with elegance. I understand he is in a day or two going to the Eastward & I presume on business of the coming election." [25]

The following month Troup was telling King that " Burr has just returned from the Eastward where he has been for the purpose of effecting a division of the New England vote . . . I recollect no period of Burr's life in which he has been more complacent than since our last election in this city." [26]

Hamilton was growing more and more worried. He had resigned himself to the defeat of his party; in fact, he even preferred the election of Jefferson " the atheist in religion " and " fanatic in politics " to that of John Adams. Adams and Burr — these were his two overwhelming hatreds, the red rags to his flaming passion. By August, however, he was thoroughly alarmed. Perhaps, through some sleight-of-hand, Burr might squeeze out even Jefferson for the premier position. This was not to be endured. Already, in August, he was telling James A. Bayard, the Federalist Congressman from Delaware, that " there seems to be too much probability that Jefferson or Burr will be President. The latter is intriguing with all his might in New Jersey, Rhode Island, and Vermont; and there is a possibility of some success in his intrigues . . . if it is so, Burr will certainly attempt to reform the government *à la Buonaparte*. He is as unprincipled and dangerous a man as any country can boast — as true a Cataline as ever met in midnight conclave." [27] Hamilton was very fond of such loose words as " intrigue," " unprincipled " and " dangerous."

To his horror, however, he discovered that other prominent Federalists were not imbued with his shuddering hatred of Burr; in fact, reading the signs aright, they were even this early considering certain possibilities involving Burr. Worse yet, the first suggestion of them came from no less a person than George Cabot of Massachusetts, high priest of Federalism, member of the all-powerful Essex Junto, hitherto devoted to Hamilton's interest.

" The question has been asked," he told Hamilton, " whether if the federalists cannot carry their first points, they would not do as well to turn the election from Jefferson to Burr? They conceive Burr to be less likely to look to France for support than Jefferson, provided he would be supported at home. They consider Burr as actuated by ordinary ambition, Jefferson by that and the pride of the Jacobinic philosophy. The former may be satisfied by power and property, the latter must see the roots of our society pulled up and a new course of cultivation substituted." [28]

In the light of subsequent events, Cabot's estimation of Jefferson's uncompromising nature was to prove wofully inadequate. One wonders therefore how much of truth there is in his unflattering characterization of Burr. All of the Federalists were to hammer the matter of his ambition. The accusation was true enough. It was also true that he was actuated by no particular philosophy of government or vision of a theoretic Utopia. But, judging from his record, there seems no doubt that had the Federalist plans been successful, they would have been sadly mistaken about their ability to sway Burr.

5. Downfall of Federalism

Slowly the returns from the several States filtered in through the summer and autumn of 1800. The tension was becoming unbearable. New Jersey went Federalist, in spite of Burr's exertions. Connecticut, too, was safely in the Federalist column. As the autumn waned, and the snows set in, it became more and more apparent that the final result would depend on three States — Pennsylvania, where the fight was waged with violence and bitterness, little Rhode Island, and South Carolina, Pinckney's home State.

On November 26th, Rhode Island appeared to have gone Republican, but the outlook was dark in Pennsylvania and South Carolina. The Republicans everywhere became gloomy, but Burr was still optimistic. He wrote his uncle, Pierpont Edwards, an active Republican of Connecticut, that " you despond without reason. If we have R. I. Jefferson will have a majority even without Pena or S. C. But in S. C. there is every reason to believe that *he* will have the whole Eight." [29] Observe the significant underscoring. Burr evidently feared that the second votes would go to Pinckney, the favorite son, and not to himself. In which case, as the election was shaping up, Burr would be defeated. This situation explains largely his special activities in the politics of that State, which were exhibited later as evidence of dark and nefarious plottings. Of course he had to campaign for himself in South Carolina. Jefferson was reasonably certain of *his* votes. Burr's were doubtful.

Three days later he received further reports, which he hastened to pass on to his uncle. " S.C. will probably give an unanimous vote for Pinckney & Jefferson. Maryland 5 & 5 — N.C. 8 & 4 — Penna probably no vote. If your people (New England) have

cut P[inckney] from two or three Votes – J[efferson] will be Prest – otherwise doubtful." [30] Burr was well aware of Hamilton's underground activities against Adams. And also, by this time, he seems to have resigned himself to his own non-election.

On November 20th he had already received an express from Georgia advising that Pinckney "appeared to entertain no other hope than that of compromizing so as to run his own Name with Jefferson." [31] The Federalists had broken party lines. Remembering certain sad experiences in 1796, Burr had good reason to fear that such a compromise might find favor in the South and leave him out of the picture completely.

No wonder, then, that complaints reached Madison, who bestirred himself promptly. He wrote to Monroe that Gelston, Burr's lieutenant, "is uneasy lest the Southern States should not be true to their duty. I hope he will be sensible that there was no occasion for it. It seems important that all proper measures should emanate from Richmond for guarding against a division of the Republican votes, by which one of the Republican Candidates may be lost. It would be superfluous to suggest to you the mischief resulting from the least ground of reproach, and particularly to Virginia, on this head." [32]

To Jefferson, Madison wrote with equal vigor. Gelston "expresses much anxiety and betrays some jealousy with respect to the *integrity* of the Southern States in keeping [Burr] in view for the secondary station. I hope the event will skreen all the parties, particularly Virginia, from any imputation on this subject; though I am not without fears that the requisite concert may not sufficiently pervade the several States." [33] This last, coming from a member of the Virginia group, is clear evidence that Burr's fears were not mere fancies, and casts a retrospective glance at 1796.

These communications show a sufficient justification for Burr's insistence that he be deprived of no Republican vote anywhere. The election was still very much in doubt – Pennsylvania had not voted as yet, South Carolina seemed likely to favor Pinckney over Burr, and the final vote of the Presidential electors would in any event be exceedingly close. A single ballot might mean the difference between election and non-election.

South Carolina, however, was to be the last State to choose its electors – not, in fact, until December 2nd, two days before the final date for the delivery of the electoral votes. Pennsylvania now held the center of the stage. If Pennsylvania elected a full college of Republican electors, a Republican would be the next President without any assistance from South Carolina. But Pennsylvania

was in the throes of a violent political upheaval. It ended in a compromise. Both Republican and Federalist electors were chosen, with a majority of one in favor of the Republicans.

South Carolina proceeded to do the unexpected. It cast its electoral votes unanimously for Jefferson and Burr, and the Republican ticket swept to triumphant victory. The Revolution of 1800 was an accomplished fact; the Federalists, holders of the reins of government since its inception, were out of office. Yet, in spite of their defeat, in spite of the demoralization that had attended their campaign, honeycombed as it was by the bitter feud between Adams and Hamilton, the result had been perilously close. The final results were: Jefferson – 73, Burr – 73, Adams – 65, Pinckney – 64, Jay – 1. A switch of 250 votes in the city of New York had decided the national election, and this small shift was to be credited solely to the agency of Aaron Burr. The Republican party had triumphed because of him.

why?