

for success and rehabilitation. He would go to England first and try his luck. From his hiding-place in Philadelphia he sent Samuel Swartwout, still unswervingly loyal, to London with a letter to his fellow-conspirator, Charles Williamson, announcing that he was on his way. But Williamson, before Burr could meet him, had been sent by the British ministry on a mission to the West Indies, to die of yellow fever in Havana, thus shattering, unknown to him, Burr's last hopes of success.<sup>51</sup>

## CHAPTER XXVII

## MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY

## 1. FLIGHT

AT the age of 51, Aaron Burr stood on the threshold, his past life in ruins, with eyes turned to Europe, eternally optimistic. Yet his flight from the shores of the country that had spurned him required stealth and finesse. Too many were eager to know his whereabouts, and chain him, if they could, to the very soil he wished to leave. He made his way by devious means to New York, and engaged passage on the British packet, *Clarissa Ann*, under the pseudonym of H. E. Edwards. For a month preceding the date of departure he lay concealed in the houses of his friends, not daring to show his face. To cast off suspicion, he wrote Theo, "Make — publish, about the time you get these, that Gamp passed through that place on the — day of June, on his way to Canada, accompanied by one Frenchman and two Americans or Englishmen."<sup>1</sup> Which announcement duly appeared in the public prints. *Gamp*, *Gampy*, *Gampillo*, *Gampasso*, were pet names current in the family, and were used indiscriminately for Aaron Burr himself and his little grandson, Aaron Burr Alston.

On June 7, 1808, muffled against inquiring looks, H. E. Edwards boarded the packet, anchor was weighed, sails bellied to catch the vagrant breeze, and Burr had set sail for the unknown. But first there had been a tragic leave-taking from one Mary Ann Edwards, likewise muffled, and otherwise known to fame as Theodosia Burr Alston, with tears and desperate affection on the one side, and smiling, albeit Spartan fortitude on the other.

Halifax was the packet's first port of call, and Burr held to the seclusion of his cabin most of the way, shunning the usual sea-going intimacy with the other twenty-six passengers on board. At that Nova Scotian port he was welcomed by Sir George Prevost, a relative on his deceased wife's side, who furnished him with letters of introduction to family and friends in England, as well as a passport certifying that "G. H. Edwards was bearer of dispatches to the Right Honorable Lord Castlereagh, at whose office he was immediately to present himself on his arrival at London."<sup>2</sup>

The passage was comparatively swift; by July 13th, he had

reached Falmouth, and three days later he was in London. He had a definite mission to perform. Williamson and Merry had failed him at an earlier date, but he was still hopeful that if he appeared in person before the members of the English Cabinet he could gain their support, or at least approval and a certain authorization, for his plans to render Mexico independent of Spain. They were, he insisted, and continued so to insist all his life, perfectly good and feasible plans, and events were to justify him. But the events were not of his making, for he was under a cloud; the malignancy of the American Government was to pursue him even to the uttermost reaches of Europe, and the Continental situation, hitherto seemingly favorable to his hopes, was changing with rapidity and secrecy.

He kept a Private Journal of his Odyssean wanderings, as a shorthand aid to his memories for the benefit of Theo, anxiously awaiting news in South Carolina. It is an astounding document: there is nothing like it in American letters, and hardly anything to which it could be compared on the franker Continent. Pepys's Diary is a model of reticence by comparison; its matter-of-fact references to things ordinarily concealed strip the human animal to the few bare wants of nature; its wit, gayety and high courage in the face of despair, misfortune, starvation even, are electric. Here is the man himself — for all to see.

His coming created a sensation in certain circles. The American Minister, William Pinkney, was not fooled by the disguise. Already he had learned of the arrival of Samuel Swartwout, who, he informed Madison, "may be bearer of dispatches from Burr to Englishmen. Had him followed, but learnt nothing."<sup>8</sup> Now the arch-conspirator himself was in London, and the perturbed Minister wrote home again, "Burr arrived in England by the last Packet . . . It has been suggested that his object was to engage in some Enterprize against Spanish America under British auspices. This plan is of course defeated (at least for the present) by the late Change in the Relations of G. B. & Spain." Troops then gathering under Sir Arthur Wellesley, later to be better known as the Duke of Wellington, were rumored to be for South America, and perhaps, thought Pinkney, Burr had expected to participate. It was also hinted that Burr was planning a rupture between Great Britain and the United States, and the Minister felt certain that Burr's interviews with the Government had been responsible for the change for the worse in the attitude of Canning toward himself.<sup>4</sup> Nothing, of course, could have been further from the truth. There was sufficient explosive material in the Orders in Council

and the Embargo to justify an attitude toward America, without Burr's intervention. But such insinuations, traveling to Jefferson and Madison, but confirmed them in their previous exceeding hostility to the exile.

Had Pinkney but known it, Burr ran into insuperable difficulties almost at once in his attempts to gain the ear of the British Government. Joseph Bonaparte, mediocre brother to the Dictator of Europe, was even then entering Madrid to be proclaimed the King of Spain by the ambitious Napoleon. It was part of his grandiose scheme to intrench his dynasty on the thrones of the mighty. With Spain in his grip, Napoleon would certainly not be interested in any scheme to dissipate its possessions. But England, hitherto hostile to Spain, now took the long, and opposite view. She immediately espoused the cause of the dethroned King and threw her forces into the Peninsula to oppose the Marshals of France. Allied now with the regnant dynasty, she, too, could hardly be a party to revolution in Mexico. *Both* doors were closed with irrevocable suddenness to Burr.

## 2. ENGLAND IS NOT INTERESTED

But these considerations were for the future. Immediately upon his arrival in London, Burr called on John Reeves, official of the British Alien Office, who was to befriend him later under dramatic circumstances. He was cordially received. Then, with his despatches from Prevost, he went to see Lord Castlereagh, who, however, was out, and continued to remain out for a considerable period. Castlereagh, the War Secretary, had no intention of helping Burr.

Dismayed at finding Williamson already gone from England, with only a note from him at hand to acknowledge receipt of his New York letter, and realizing with painful perspicuity that the European situation had wholly changed since he had set sail for England with such high hopes, he wrote his absent friend, "Your absence is extremely distressing and embarrassing, as it is a contingency against which I had made no provision. Though the new state of things defeats, for the present, the speculations we had proposed, yet it opens new views, not less important."<sup>5</sup> What these "new views" were, it is difficult to determine. Perhaps they were the suggestions of Williamson himself, left behind in his note, that Burr had the "power to advise [the English Cabinet] what means would most certainly prevent the French in the present crisis from having command of the Floridas and Mexico. No man can give so

valuable information as yourself." <sup>6</sup> Doubtless Burr also figured on the long view. Mexico and the Floridas in Napoleon's iron grip meant the end of all his dreams; but, freed from French domination by English aid, the next shift in the kaleidoscope of European politics might place England and Spain once more in age-old opposition, and he could then descend with considerable prospect of success on the weak-held colonies of that dying Power.

On August 10th, he made out his alien declaration, as was required under the law, and gave as the reason for his presence in England that "I am known personally to Lord Mulgrave and Mr. Canning, to whom the motives to my visit have been declared. These reasons have long been known to Lord Melville." <sup>7</sup> For Burr had finally achieved that much measure of success. Canning, Cooke, Castlereagh and Mulgrave, all of the Cabinet, had at length opened their doors to him and his schemes. At least they had listened and questioned.

But if Burr met with scant success in thus knocking at the doors of the hard-headed statesmen of the Empire, all social doors swung wide at his coming. The Prevost family was well connected in England, and Charles Williamson had a host of friends and relations among the nobility. Baron Balgray was his brother, and he took to Burr immediately. So did the second Lord Melville. Military circles treated his soldierly qualities with respect, ladies of high and low degree discovered that same irresistible attraction toward the middle-aged widower which had been a prevalent disease in America, his courtly bearing and polished manner charmed aristocratic gatherings and country week-ends; while those circles in which intellect, wit and culture reigned supreme, hailed him as an equal and a brother.

Amid all his weary waiting at political doors, amid sightseeing of ruins and picture galleries, amid a bewildering succession of routs, entertainments, dances, cards, visits, parties *à deux*, nothing delighted him more than the simple invitation of Jeremy Bentham to "pass some days, *chez lui*." <sup>8</sup> Burr had been among the very first in the United States to recognize the genius of that economist and moral philosopher, and now, his "amiable simplicity," his unaffected goodness and kindness of spirit, earned an equally warm admiration for the man. And it was reciprocated. Burr spent a week-end at Barrow Green, Bentham's country residence, and, on returning to town, was forthwith lodged at the philosopher's town house in Queen's Square Place.

He met also, and became intimate with, William Godwin, whose advanced ideas had struck sympathetic chords; Charles Lamb, the



Courtesy of Estate of Dr. John E. Stillwell

AARON BURR, IN OLD AGE  
From a portrait by Henry Inman

gentle essayist; William Cobbett, the fierce "Peter Porcupine," whose quills were tipped with pamphleteering poison. Cobbett even tried to persuade Burr to stand for Parliament and rise to those heights in British political life for which his talents eminently fitted him. Fasel, the fashionable painter, took his commissions, lords and ladies vied with each other in extending the utmost hospitality. But it was Jeremy Bentham who commanded his complete idolatry—for the first time in his life Burr was humble in the presence of his fellow-man. "I hasten to make you acquainted with Jeremy Bentham," he wrote enthusiastically to Theo, "author of a work entitled Principles of Morals and Legislation . . . and of many other works of less labour and research. You will recollect to have heard me place this man second to no one, ancient or modern, in profound thinking, in logical and analytic reasoning."<sup>9</sup> To Bentham he had been equally enthusiastic in his descriptions of Theo and little Gamby (his grandson); so much so that Bentham insisted on receiving a portrait of the beloved daughter, and requested Burr to send "my dear little Theodosia" a package of all his works.

Meanwhile, at regular intervals, Burr continued to cool his heels in the anterooms of Cabinet members, and to meet with frigid evasions when he actually penetrated to the inner sanctums. England was strangely cold to X, as Burr had designated his Mexican scheme in cipher to Theo. As the autumn waned, he grew more and more discouraged. "I have no longer the slightest hope of the countenance of the ministry for anything which might be proposed," he told Bentham sadly. "I am an object of suspicion and alarm."<sup>10</sup> For this there were several good and sufficient reasons. One was that Spain was now an ally, and must have looked askance at the presence of Aaron Burr, her arch-enemy. The second was the attitude of the American Ministry, to whom Burr was a traitor and a fugitive from justice. The final reason was England's own uncasiness over this restless, talented individual within its borders, whose activities no one had ever fathomed fully, and whose course was as unpredictable as the vagaries of chance.

To add to his discouragement, about this time he received a letter from Bollman, his fellow-conspirator. Bollman had attempted to settle in New Orleans to the prosaic practice of medicine, but found that "the Americans shun me; and Clark himself, on his return, anxious to make his peace with his enemies . . . rather avoided me; wished me not to call on him, and came to see me by stealth." Only Judge Workman, "now practicing as a lawyer . . . is constantly excited in the old cause. His looks are

Aaron Burr

On Board the Saragosa  
near Washington

Your dear letter and your paper one have both been  
- It is with pleasure I remark that your paper did not  
under your invitation to business - at this rate one  
may and then venture on a debauch -

I shall leave Newburgh for Albany on Sat-  
day 2<sup>d</sup> of - Forward to Albany all letters and papers.  
- papers until further orders.

In answer to the sheriff, I have got 30 days  
more time to surmount - make further expenses  
I have ordered John to follow on the day  
of your arrival - give him ten Dollars - 100  
He will supply his place -

Pray haste back, for things go very ill  
without you - our sad disgrace at  
Washington is felt on for business for many hours.  
99

I have taken the liberty to say to Mr. A. B. that  
she may come to you her 1000 acres of land in  
Delaware in order to facilitate the purchase  
of W. Lathrop } City of her title by purchase in my name; and will  
be sent to you in

Courtesy of The New York Historical Society

LETTER FROM BURR TO G. W. LATHROP, 1814-1815 (?)

steadfastly turned to the South." Disgusted, Bollman had tried his luck in New York; failing there, he intended to return to France.<sup>11</sup> This was a considerable blow to Burr. He had still hugged to his bosom the delusion that New Orleans was only awaiting the magic of his presence and the clarion-call to arms to rise *en masse* and pour its men and treasure into the long-anticipated advance on Mexico. Even with the members of the Mexican Association, Jefferson had triumphed.

Nor were matters much better with his adored Theo. She was sick, suffering constantly, worn out with anxiety for her father, and a pariah in her native surroundings. With tragic pathos she wrote Burr, "The world begins to cool terribly around me. You would be surprised how many I supposed attached to me have abandoned the sorry, losing game of disinterested friendship. Frederic alone [her half-brother] however, is worth a host."<sup>12</sup> She was in New York now, feeling to the full the weight of loneliness and execration that enveloped everything pertaining to Burr. Her husband, back in South Carolina, meant very little to her now. He had failed her worshiped father in his hour of need; he was but a poor stick to lean upon. More, he was parsimonious and kept a tight hold on the purse-strings. Very few words of endearment were hereafter to pass between them.<sup>13</sup> In all the world she had but three passions — her father, her child, and X.

And now X was gone from the trinity! "You are well and happy," she wrote her father on hearing the mournful news, "but X is abandoned! This certainly was inevitable, but I cannot part with what had so long lain near my heart, and not feel some regret, some sorrow. No doubt there are many other roads to happiness, but this appeared so perfectly suitable to you, so complete a remuneration for all the past . . . that I cherished it as my comfort." *Eheu fugaces!* Then bravely, smiling through her tears, "My knowledge of your character, however, consoles me greatly. You will not remain idle. The situation in which you are placed would excite apathy itself, and your mind needs no external impetus." Then, turning to more cheerful topics, she exclaims, "When shall I receive the journal? Good Heaven, how it will delight me!"<sup>14</sup> Alas, she was never to see it, never to read that naked, stripped account of indomitable gesturing against the pursuing gods. She alone would have understood the childlike disclosures of his soul, the casual obscenities with which the original text is studded. He held no secrets from *her*. But an ironic, cruelly sportive fate decreed otherwise.

She was ill now, desperately so. Burr was terribly alarmed. He

haunted the offices of the English practitioners, describing her symptoms as they came to him through slow and unsatisfactory mails, seeking advice, the possibility of cures. In final desperation he determined to bring her to England to obtain the best medical advice. He wrote strongly about it to Alston, "As to money, I have transferred over to Theodosia the small sum which had been destined for my own expenses (say four or five hundred guineas); this will pay her passage and expenses to this place, and maintain her in the way I propose she shall live for four or five months . . . It is probable that her fate will be determined within six or eight months. If she survive, I shall return with her to the United States."<sup>15</sup>

But Alston refused to permit her to go. Instead, he insisted that she return to the hot, miasmatic lowlands of their South Carolinian home, and fulfil her wifely duties. When Burr heard of it, he was furious. He scolded Theo for her meek subservience, and berated Alston. "He gave me his word before marriage," he exclaimed to his daughter, "and I claim now the renewal of that promise. You may be made to do anything; to say anything; to write anything. After four experiments, all nearly fatal, I would not have made a *fifth with a dog*."<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the ever-bubbling Anthony Merry had promised his assistance. Burr waited and possessed his soul in patience for his arrival, "and till I shall see whether no other engines can be brought into use for the occasion. If it fail, heighho for the Mediterranean," he told Bentham. "Nevertheless, if there should remain even a remote hope of obtaining the countenance of this government, I will not quit the field. My American friends have very sagaciously concluded that the present state of things in Spain is calculated to promote my views! Hence some ferment."<sup>17</sup> And he was in constant communication with revolutionists in Spain itself, through the medium of Don Castella, who likewise was interested in Mexican independence.<sup>18</sup>

But Merry was mournfully to report that "although I could not see Mr. Canning . . . I conversed with another person of nearly equal authority, who told me he was sure that what you proposed to me yesterday could never be consented to, pointing it out in every way to be impracticable."<sup>19</sup> The last small door had been firmly and decisively shut in Burr's face.

There was nothing left for Burr to do but seek his fortunes elsewhere. In the Mediterranean were troubled waters, in which possibly he could fish to some profit. X — the conquest of Mexico — had become the ruling passion of his life, a fixed monomania.

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For this course he was to suffer much criticism in the United States — that country which had spewed him forth as a traitor. In later years, Burr himself was ashamed of this sudden action, and tried to deny it. But at the moment it seemed the only way in which he could remain in England, or travel where he willed under the protectingegis of a British passport. It was a novel and rather amazing point — this claim of his to British citizenship. His argument was a strange compound of subtlety, naïveté and sophistry. At his birth, he maintained, he had been a British subject. The Colonies had rebelled and cast off their citizenship. But, *in English law*, he insisted, once an Englishman, always an Englishman. His very attempt to cast off his obligations was a futility, and now he was returning to the fold. A doctrine which would have had the strange consequence of making the millions of independent Americans, *in English law*, still subjects of His Majesty.

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### 3. THE GRAND TOUR

On December 21st, Burr started on his tour, armed with numerous letters of introduction. His first stop was Oxford, and on the stagecoach he met "a very pretty, graceful, arch-looking girl, about 18." But alas, "M'lle. was reserved and distant," and even when he finally progressed to breakfast "*tete-a-tete*", he could go no further. Somewhat ruefully he made a memorandum, some day "to write an essay, historical and critical, on the education and treatment of women in England. Its influence on morals and happiness."<sup>24</sup> Burr could never resist a pretty face, a trim figure, the speaking eye.

The next day he was equally at home dining gravely with the Oxford Provost, who "though he speaks of Bentham with reverence, and, probably prays for him, I presume he thinks that he will be eternally damned [Bentham's views on revealed religion were rather unorthodox], and I have no doubt he expects to be lolling in Abraham's bosom with great complacency, hearing Bentham sing out for a drop of water. Such," exclaimed Burr in amused indignation, "is the mild genius of our holy religion."<sup>25</sup> He was Bentham's most enthusiastic disciple, and wherever he went, in whatever gathering, Bentham's name, Bentham's genius, Bentham's doctrines were his constant theme.

Christmas Eve found him in Birmingham, and here begins the

record of his amorous adventures, described so casually and with no moral undertones. He mingled with the gay throngs until "at length I got so well suited with a couple that we agreed to walk and see the town. I have always had a passion for certain branches of natural history."<sup>26</sup> An overpowering passion, it seems. To almost the very end of his long life his sexual prowess remained unimpaired and of an abounding vitality. The flesh to him was a natural need, and the appeasement of desire an equally natural function. Ordinary moral criteria cannot be applied to such men — the case books of medical history are full of similar instances; and medical men understand — and are tolerant.

But this particular adventure had a tawdry ending. In the course of it he found himself robbed of his passage ticket to Liverpool, he had lost, spent or had stolen from him 28 shillings, and a pair of gloves disappeared. Accordingly, he was compelled to take an outside passage on the coach to Liverpool at half price, unregenerate, unrepentant.

On New Year's Day he was in Edinburgh, where he was immediately taken into the bosom of aristocracy, literati, bench and bar alike. For over a month he remained in that hospitable Scottish town, tasting to the full all manner of things. He met and became intimate boon companions with Lord Justice Clerk, Alexander McKenzie, the author, Francis Jeffrey, founder and for 26 years the editor of the famous *Edinburgh Review*, whose savage criticism was later falsely assumed to have been the inducing cause of John Keats' death; the Lord Mayor welcomed him, and Sir Walter Scott, at the height of his powers, treated his literary criticism with respect. Not to speak of a horde of lesser lights — lords and ladies, dukes and marquises, men of wealth and men of fashion, admirals, generals, authors, editors, judges and lawyers. In fact, the cream of Scotch society. Life became a round of invitations, suppers, dances, music and amorous adventures. "I lead a life of the utmost dissipation," he confessed to Bentham. "Driving out every day and at some party almost every night. Wasting time and doing many silly things." But wisely taking cream of tartar punch — his favorite remedy for indigestion — the following mornings.<sup>27</sup>

But in the maze of flattering attentions, he had not forgotten the *raison d'être* of his European wanderings. He found a warm ally in Lord Justice Clerk, who corresponded about X with Lord Melville in London, but, thought Burr, he "does not go to work right."<sup>28</sup> Clerk considered it advisable for Burr to return at once to London, abandoning the rest of his tour. Burr's claim to British citizenship was still pending "and has made a very considerable

sensation in the Cabinet," he was told. "Cobbett very deeply impregnated with the magnitude of your talents as a statesman and a soldier. They [Cobbett and some one in power active in Burr's behalf] had been consulting together how it was possible that you should be brought into Parliament, supposing the above question to form no obstacle."<sup>29</sup>

For the first time the prospects were encouraging. It was with considerable reluctance, however, that Burr tore himself away from his friendly hosts, and reached London on February 7th. Bentham sent for him immediately, and he was rushed to a conference with General Hope, who had considerable influence, and in whom Charles Williamson had confided the old plans, even to the extent of divulging Burr's secret cipher. But the excitement died out as quickly as it had arisen. Once more Burr found himself adrift.

New matters rose to plague him. His slender resources — funds borrowed chiefly from American friends before he sailed — were evaporating rapidly in the careless profusion of his daily expense; and suddenly a London bookseller threatened him with arrest for debt on a four-year-old claim for books he had ordered while in the United States, but which had been seized by the United States Government at the port of entry. The amount was 117 pounds, a "trifling" sum, Burr advised Alston, but "by no means convenient to pay it out of my slender resources." So he determined to shift his residence from Bentham's house, where he had made his home ever since his arrival in England. "The benevolent heart of J. B. shall never be saddened by the spectacle of Gamp's arrest," he declared.<sup>30</sup> It is a significant disclosure of his character that never once, in the darkest hours of destitution and starvation, did he make known his plight to Jeremy Bentham, who, though of modest means himself, would have been only too happy to have shared with him.

To avoid arrest, he took obscure quarters on February 12th, at 35 St. James Street, under an assumed name. His new landlady, whose name, strangely enough, turned out to be Madame Prevost, was young and personable, and became "extremely attentive — *Un air d'elegance et d'abbatement. Peutetre 28.*" (An air of elegance and dejection. Perhaps 28.) Indeed, "Sent by the Devil to sed. [seduce] Gamp," he protested to his Diary.<sup>31</sup> Burr usually descended to a particularly barbarous French, interlarded with obscure abbreviations and obscurer phrases when jotting down these daily mementoes of his amorous adventurings.

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### 3. THE GRAND TOUR

On December 21st, Burr started on his tour, armed with numerous letters of introduction. His first stop was Oxford, and on the stagecoach he met "a very pretty, graceful, arch-looking girl, about 18." But alas, "M'lle. was reserved and distant," and even when he finally progressed to breakfast "*tele-a-tele*", he could go no further. Somewhat ruefully he made a memorandum, some day "to write an essay, historical and critical, on the education and treatment of women in England. Its influence on morals and happiness."<sup>24</sup> Burr could never resist a pretty face, a trim figure, the speaking eye.

The next day he was equally at home dining gravely with the Oxford Provost, who "though he speaks of Bentham with reverence, and, probably prays for him, I presume he thinks that he will be eternally damned [Bentham's views on revealed religion were rather unorthodox], and I have no doubt he expects to be lolling in Abraham's bosom with great complacency, hearing Bentham sing out for a drop of water. Such," exclaimed Burr in amused indignation, "is the mild genius of our holy religion."<sup>25</sup> He was Bentham's most enthusiastic disciple, and wherever he went, in whatever gathering, Bentham's name, Bentham's genius, Bentham's doctrines were his constant theme.

Christmas Eve found him in Birmingham, and here begins the



steadfastly turned to the South." Disgusted, Bollman had tried his luck in New York; failing there, he intended to return to France.<sup>11</sup> This was a considerable blow to Burr. He had still hugged to his bosom the delusion that New Orleans was only awaiting the magic of his presence and the clarion-call to arms to rise *en masse* and pour its men and treasure into the long-anticipated advance on Mexico. Even with the members of the Mexican Association, Jefferson had triumphed.

Nor were matters much better with his adored Theo. She was sick, suffering constantly, worn out with anxiety for her father, and a pariah in her native surroundings. With tragic pathos she wrote Burr, "The world begins to cool terribly around me. You would be surprised how many I supposed attached to me have abandoned the sorry, losing game of disinterested friendship. Frederic alone [her half-brother] however, is worth a host."<sup>12</sup> She was in New York now, feeling to the full the weight of loneliness and execration that enveloped everything pertaining to Burr. Her husband, back in South Carolina, meant very little to her now. He had failed her worshiped father in his hour of need; he was but a poor stick to lean upon. More, he was parsimonious and kept a tight hold on the purse-strings. Very few words of endearment were hereafter to pass between them.<sup>13</sup> In all the world she had but three passions — her father, her child, and X.

And now X was gone from the trinity! "You are well and happy," she wrote her father on hearing the mournful news, "but X is abandoned! This certainly was inevitable, but I cannot part with what had so long lain near my heart, and not feel some regret, some sorrow. No doubt there are many other roads to happiness, but this appeared so perfectly suitable to you, so complete a remuneration for all the past . . . that I cherished it as my comfort." *Eheu fugaces!* Then bravely, smiling through her tears, "My knowledge of your character, however, consoles me greatly. You will not remain idle. The situation in which you are placed would excite apathy itself, and your mind needs no external impetus." Then, turning to more cheerful topics, she exclaims, "When shall I receive the journal? Good Heaven, how it will delight me!"<sup>14</sup> Alas, she was never to see it, never to read that naked, stripped account of indomitable gesturing against the pursuing gods. She alone would have understood the childlike disclosures of his soul, the casual obscenities with which the original text is studded. He held no secrets from *her*. But an ironic, cruelly sportive fate decreed otherwise.

She was ill now, desperately so. Burr was terribly alarmed. He

haunted the offices of the English practitioners, describing her symptoms as they came to him through slow and unsatisfactory mails, seeking advice, the possibility of cures. In final desperation he determined to bring her to England to obtain the best medical advice. He wrote strongly about it to Alston, "As to money, I have transferred over to Theodosia the small sum which had been destined for my own expenses (say four or five hundred guineas); this will pay her passage and expenses to this place, and maintain her in the way I propose she shall live for four or five months . . . It is probable that her fate will be determined within six or eight months. If she survive, I shall return with her to the United States."<sup>15</sup>

But Alston refused to permit her to go. Instead, he insisted that she return to the hot, miasmatic lowlands of their South Carolinian home, and fulfil her wifely duties. When Burr heard of it, he was furious. He scolded Theo for her meek subservience, and berated Alston. "He gave me his word before marriage," he exclaimed to his daughter, "and I claim now the renewal of that promise. You may be made to do anything; to say anything; to write anything. After four experiments, all nearly fatal, I would not have made a *fifth with a dog*."<sup>16</sup>

Meanwhile, the ever-bubbling Anthony Merry had promised his assistance. Burr waited and possessed his soul in patience for his arrival, "and till I shall see whether no other engines can be brought into use for the occasion. If it fail, heighho for the Mediterranean," he told Bentham. "Nevertheless, if there should remain even a remote hope of obtaining the countenance of this government, I will not quit the field. My American friends have very sagaciously concluded that the present state of things in Spain is calculated to promote my views! Hence some ferment."<sup>17</sup> And he was in constant communication with revolutionists in Spain itself, through the medium of Don Castella, who likewise was interested in Mexican independence.<sup>18</sup>

But Merry was mournfully to report that "although I could not see Mr. Canning . . . I conversed with another person of nearly equal authority, who told me he was sure that what you proposed to me yesterday could never be consented to, pointing it out in every way to be impracticable."<sup>19</sup> The last small door had been firmly and decisively shut in Burr's face.

There was nothing left for Burr to do but seek his fortunes elsewhere. In the Mediterranean were troubled waters, in which possibly he could fish to some profit. X — the conquest of Mexico — had become the ruling passion of his life, a fixed monomania.

sentiment, though I think we shall go rapidly through it, thought it necessary to coo dow [kowitz?].” He went through it rapidly enough. “An hour with Madame P. *La 2 leçon car. et souprs.*” (The second lesson consists of caresses and sighs.) The next jotyping was optimistic. “*Des progres; ça je finira en deux jours.*” (Progress. I’ll finish that in two days.) He surprised himself. For, that very night, is the significant entry, “*Couche at 1/2 p 10 . . . Des. progr. rapides.*”<sup>32</sup>

The course of true love did not run quite smooth. There were blushes, tears, protests; all in all, “*Jo. melange*” (pretty mess!). But soon the too-charming landlady became more moderate in her transports, and life in hiding ran smoothly along for several weeks. On March 4th, however, someone had inquired about him in the neighborhood, and he shifted his quarters hastily to the house of some friends. There was a civil warrant of arrest out for him on the bookseller’s claim. Two weeks later, he decided it was safe again to move back to Mme. Prevost. To such illicit subterfuges was the man who had been exalted to the seats of the mighty now compelled to descend.

But he had been watched. On April 4, 1809, “having a confused presentiment that something was wrong, packed up my papers and clothes with intent to go out and seek other lodgings.” It was too late. “At 1 o’clock came in, without knocking, four coarse-looking men, who said they had a state warrant for seizing me and my papers; but refused to show the warrant. I was peremptory, and the warrant was produced, signed Liverpool.”<sup>33</sup> This was far worse than the mere civil arrest from which he had been hiding. “They took possession of my trunks,” the Journal narrates, “searched every part of the room for papers, threw all the loose articles into a sack, called a coach, and away we went to the Alien Office.” Reeve came out to the prisoning coach with serious mien, told him hastily “he could not then explain, but . . . I must have patience.” Immediately he was whisked away to the house of one of his captors, and held there *incommunicado*, although treated with proper respect, and the mistress of the house, he soon discovered, was pretty and quite bearable.<sup>34</sup> Burr by this time was well accustomed to arrests and imprisonments, and took them with a careless gayety.

But powerful friends were at work. On the third day, he was taken back to the Alien Office, his papers and effects restored unopened, and there was a letter of apology for his arrest from Lord Liverpool, who had signed the warrant. It was but temporary surcease, however. Crude methods had been employed, and had

failed because of active opposition by men like Reeve, Cobbett, Lord Melville, General Hope, Baron Balgray, all partisans of Burr. Politer methods were to succeed, however.

The British Government was determined to rid itself of this constant thorn in its side. It mistrusted him, was a little afraid of his bold and enterprising spirit; while the American and Spanish embassies alike agitated incessantly for stern measures against him. The most powerful nations of the world presented a united hostile front to this solitary little man. One against the world — yet the world feared, while it scourged him!

On April 14, 1809, still at Madame Prevost’s, he received a message, “Lord Liverpool expects that you will leave town this day and the kingdom tomorrow.”<sup>35</sup> To enforce the peremptory demand, Burr’s young secretary, Hosack, was arrested, and freed only with the greatest difficulty. Burr defied the order, though agreeing to leave in due time and to the place of his own choice. He won.

Eleven days later, on April 25th, he received passports for himself and his secretary for Sweden, which, he thought, was “the most proper asylum,” for almost every other port in Europe was under the control of France and its allies, and hence barred to his entrance or dangerous to his person. Spanish ports were even worse. To a friend in New York, he wrote bitterly, “Mr. Jefferson, or the Spanish Juntas, or probably both, have had influence enough to drive me out of this country.”<sup>36</sup> Homeless, a wanderer on the face of the earth, there was only Sweden to which he could turn for a certain neutrality. Yet not a word of complaint to Theo, not a moment of hopeless repining in the privacy of the Journal, no clamoring against inimical Fate.

“I witness your extraordinary fortitude with new wonder at every new misfortune,” wrote Theo in almost breathless adoration. “You appear to me so superior, so elevated above all other men, I contemplate you with such a strange mixture of humility, admiration, reverence, love, and pride, that very little superstition would be necessary to make me worship you as a superior being; such enthusiasm does your character excite in me. . . . I had rather not live than not be the daughter of such a man.”<sup>37</sup>

The very day the passports came, he boarded His Britannic Majesty’s packet, the *Diana*, a 60-ton sloop, and set sail for Sweden. England had spewed him forth; what adventures lay ahead on the Continent?

## 4. SWEDISH JOURNEY

Burr landed in Gothenburg, neat and very trim Swedish port, on May 2nd. Hosack, left behind to settle his affairs, came by a later boat, and joined him on the 6th. Burr's first impression was unappetizing. He lost his trunk with all his clothes — an irremediable loss in the precarious state of his finances — but fortunately it was recovered intact in a few days. Whereupon the pair journeyed on to Stockholm, the nation's capital.

At Stockholm Burr was once more in his element. He had a sheaf of letters of introduction, and the kindly Swedish folk took him into their collective bosoms. With the very highest and the very lowest, he was equally at home, and equally attractive. At the top of the social ladder he met and was cordially entertained by Colonel and Professor Gahn, the historian and geographer Catteau-Calleville and Baron Munck, and was given the freedom of the very exclusive Society of Nobles. He was even presented to the Swedish Regent, and "you would have laughed to see Gamp with his sword and immense three-cornered hat."<sup>38</sup>

At the other end of the scale, he was equally irresistible to a maid at his lodgings, who came to his room and whom "*Ne saur renvoir.*" (I couldn't send back.)<sup>39</sup> His Journal now contains almost daily references to certain peculiar lessons in natural history, expressed invariably in a vile shorthand French, with the price of each lesson unblushingly affixed. Casual encounters with prostitutes — pale and pretty ones, stout and otherwise, blondes, brunettes, country girls and servants — as well as countesses and court ladies, with no price tags; all were grist for the mill.

And, interspersed with these, constant visiting, dances, concerts, drives, walks — with the inevitable amorous encounter at the end — art galleries, levees, to bed long after midnight and up at six every morning, and, withal, long conversations with legists on the Swedish law. "You will be charmed to hear the results of my inquiries on this head," he wrote for the later edification of Theo. "Only to think of a people, the most honest and peaceable in the world, and not a lawyer! No such animal, (according to English ideas of a lawyer), in Sweden! But again and again I remind you that this Journal is only a memorandum to talk from. The most interesting and amusing incidents are not noted at all, because I am sure to remember them."<sup>40</sup>

His acute intellect required constant satisfaction as well as his body and senses. He read extensively in Swedish jurisprudence and on the civil administration, making copious notes and inquiring

of judges and famous lawyers. The Swedish law and system of government fascinated him, and he had every intention of some day publishing on the subject. Nor were his interests confined to the law. He read considerably in the drama, history, military science, travels, moral and social studies, and, always, Bentham. Breda, the famous painter, was his intimate, and found him a connoisseur. In short, Burr, at the age of 53, an exile, an outcast, was displaying an intellectual and physical vitality that would have sadly taxed the resources of men of half his years and under happier conditions. Misfortune could not touch him; age could not wither or stale his infinite variety. He lived in the present and the future; the past was ever a resolutely closed book. He was indifferent to criticism and malignity. There is a significant item in the Journal that explains much that might otherwise have sounded incredible in his previous career. "Aug. 20, 1809 — It was not till yesterday that I learnt that I have been a subject of newspaper discussion for several weeks. What is said about me I have neither heard nor inquired."<sup>41</sup>

After four months of Sweden he took stock of himself. The life had been so full, so interesting, so physically involved, that even his insatiable appetites were glutted. He had paid out innumerable rix-dollars for the flesh, and had satisfied the spirit with scenery, museums, private collections, art galleries, and with long, judicious talks with scientists, literary men, philosophers and savants in the law. He had visited mines and shown puzzled Swedish engineers how to drain a lake; he still was preoccupied with his favorite topic — the emancipation of women and the discovery that they have souls and brains as well as men. He read essays on the subject and found that the moralists were on the wrong track, "and of course [had] not found the remedy; this will remain for Gamp."<sup>42</sup> His notes on law and government were slowly taking form.

But he had not forgotten Theo, or his friends in America, or X. On September 2, 1809, the stocktaking had its effect. "It is no easy matter, *ma Min.* [my Minerva]," he told his Journal, "to determine how to dispose of myself. Why stay here? To be sure I am unmolested and live at no great expense, but *tem. fug.* [*tempus fugit*] and nothing done. When I came here it was with intent to stay till answers should be received to my letters written to the United States." But there had been no mail for four months. Evidently the British Government, mistress of the high seas, was not permitting his letters to pass through the cordon. "The summary is," he concluded, "that I am resolved to go without knowing ex-

actly why or where . . . The facility of getting to a particular place may of itself determine my course. To be sure the *embarras* of traveling on the Continent is very great, but I am in utter despair of receiving letters through England." 43

This hasty jotting throws a flood of light on Burr's motives in this Continental tour. It was not as aimless, as dilatory, as feckless as most commentators have thought. When the European situation closed all doors to an outlet for his Mexican plans, he had determined to return to the United States. But various indictments still hung over his head — the one for murder in New Jersey, which was a dead letter; the one for sending a challenge in New York, which might require political manipulation. This, however, had already been taken care of by Tammany and the Swartwouts.

De Witt Clinton, engaged in a political squabble with Governor Morgan Lewis, approached the Burrrites with an offer of peace if they would aid him in the party warfare. In December, 1805, his agent had promised Tammany and those loyal to Burr the discount facilities of the Manhattan Bank, recognition as party members in good standing, appointments to office, a cessation of Cheatham's attacks, and even, under pressure, that Burr, their leader and idol, would be unmolested in New York. A secret meeting was held with John Swartwout, Peter Irving and Matthew L. Davis, at which the terms were arranged. On February 29, 1806, Clintonians and Burrrites joined in a love feast at Dyde's Hotel in celebration of the union. The banquet was a secret, but the newspapers got wind of it, and a howl went up from unreconstructed Clintonians and Burrrites alike. The uninvited Burrrites, fearing they would be left out in the cold, joined the followers of Morgan Lewis in a meeting at Martling's Long Room, the home of Tammany, and organized a protestant faction, known as the Martling Men, whose enmity followed De Witt Clinton to his ultimate downfall.<sup>44</sup> In any event, this indictment, too, was a dead letter.

But the Ohio indictment on the filibuster charge was in Jefferson's unrelenting hands, and Burr's numerous creditors with their threats of civil arrest were just as adamant in their determination to collect. It was these matters which required clearing up. Burr had been forced from England before he could hear from his correspondents. The Swedish mails went through English ports, and England was holding up all letters to and from Burr. When, finally on October 12th, a letter was smuggled through to him by private hand from Theo, he was so overjoyed that he "could have kissed the fellow!"<sup>45</sup> It was necessary, therefore, to find some

other place where the mails would not be subject to the censorship of England. This intense interest of the political police of many European countries in the correspondence of Aaron Burr explains the shorthand of the Journal, the villainous French, the total lack of all political comment. His effects had been seized once; there was no telling when it might happen again.

"Be very careful what you write," he warned an unnamed correspondent. "Every letter is liable to inspection. One indiscreet expression might expose your letters to be burned, and perhaps me with them. Avoid everything having reference to politics, and there is no danger."<sup>46</sup> One wonders whether the preoccupation of the Journal with *mouse* (a slang French expression constantly employed by Burr, meaning "the rutting period in animals"), and the vulgar details set out at length, were not part and parcel of a clever scheme. Should Burr be subject to another visitation, this Journal would be evidence to a cynical police that the owner, so occupied with low pursuits, could not possibly be involved in dangerous conspiracies, and therefore they might be impelled to dismiss him as a harmless voluptuary.

##### 5. HAMLET AND GOETHE

Burr's first thought was of Russia. It was comparatively easy of access from Sweden, and its alliances with the countries hostile to Burr were not particularly entangling. With Russia as a base, he might be in a better position to survey the scene and plan his return. There was also the memory of John Paul Jones, who had carved an adventurous niche for himself in that semi-Oriental country.

But John Quincy Adams was in Russia on an official mission from the United States. Ever since he had turned Republican, and sunned himself in the favors of Republican Administrations, he had joined the baying circle of Burr's enemies. On November 15, 1809, Count Romanzoff, the Russian Minister, informed him "that Colonel Burr, now at Gottenburg, had applied for a passport to come to Petersburg, which had been refused him, unless it should be regularly applied for under the sanction of the representative of his country at this Court."<sup>47</sup> Some three months later, Romanzoff told Adams again that if Burr "wanted to come here he must make his application through me [J. Q. A.], and, if I had desired it, no difficulty would have been made."<sup>48</sup> Evidently, John Quincy Adams did *not* desire it.

Thus rebuffed, Burr turned elsewhere, and succeeded finally

in obtaining passports for himself and his secretary to Denmark. He had started on his travels again.

He landed at Elsinore, famous for its castle and more famous for Hamlet's ghost. He did not stop to walk the hoary battlements at midnight but continued on to Copenhagen, where, the very evening of his arrival, "after strolling an hour, during which *mus. mauv.*; 1 d. [bad *muse*, 1 dollar] came home," where "the chambermaid, fat, not bad; *muse* again."<sup>49</sup>

Owing to the heavy depreciation of the paper currency, Burr found living cheap in Denmark, but, even so, his funds were beginning to be a constant source of anxiety to him. A most welcome, though embarrassing addition came in the form of a draft for 1,000 marks from Lüning, a friend he had made in Sweden. It was a wholly unexpected, unsolicited loan. With it was a note. "I cannot tell you how much I am thankful to Providence for having given me the pleasure to get acquainted with a man whom I admired long ago. I esteemed you before; now I love you."<sup>50</sup> Aaron Burr excited either idolatry or unremitting hate in the bosoms of men; as for women, they uniformly adored him.

In Denmark he met Friedrich Schlegel, the great critic, whose "Treatise on Neutral Rights" he had read and much admired. He went by slow stages through that tiny kingdom, mostly by wagon, and taking along with him, throughout his travels, the painted lineaments of Theo, which he never left out of his sight, even holding the large portrait in his lap, as "I could not bear to see you," he wrote, "bouncing about at the bottom of the wagon."<sup>51</sup>

On November 8, 1809, he was over its borders and into what is now modern Germany, finally coming to rest in the little town of Altona, close to Hamburg, on the Elbe River. His funds, even with Lüning's windfall, were very low. He remained here for over a month, making frequent trips into neighboring Hamburg. There were a good many Americans in the town, and, for the first time since leaving London, Burr felt a decided coolness in the air. He was not given ordinarily to complaining, so that his allusions to the situation must have been the result of a full heart. "I find that, among the great number of Americans here and *there*," he wrote in his Journal, "all are hostile to A. B. — all. What a lot of rascals they must be to make war on one whom they do not know; on one who never did harm or wished harm to a human being. Yet they, perhaps, ought not to be blamed, for they are influenced by what they hear. I learn further that A. B. is announced in the Paris

papers in a manner no way auspicious."<sup>52</sup> The former was discouraging, the latter disastrous.

His last chance on the Continent lay in France. In the kaleidoscopic whirl of politics and arms, at this particular moment Napoleon might be willing to listen to his schemes. Victory seemed perched on British arms in Spain, and Spanish possessions in America were at the mercy of the British fleet. Burr had no further love for England, after his unceremonious deportation from that tight little isle, and France had always been the object of his admiration. But the French Minister at Hamburg, De Bourrienne, was exceedingly evasive on the subject of a passport to Paris. Burr's money was now exhausted, and there was no prospect of any more. He persisted with De Bourrienne until the Minister finally granted him a passport to a frontier town in France, and advised him that he would have to write direct to Paris if he wished to go further. Later, De Bourrienne was to remember this episode: "At the height of his glory and power, Bonaparte was so suspicious that the veriest trifle sufficed to alarm him. . . . I recollect . . . Colonel Burr, formerly Vice-President of the United States, who had recently arrived at Altona, was pointed out to me as a dangerous man, and I received orders to watch him very closely, and to arrest him on the slightest ground of suspicion if he should come to Hamburg. Colonel Burr was one of those in favor of whom I ventured to disobey the orders I received from the restless police of Paris. As soon as the Minister of Police heard of his arrival in Altona, he directed me to adopt towards him those violent measures which are equivalent to persecution. In answer to these instructions, I stated that Colonel Burr conducted himself at Altona with much prudence and propriety; that he kept but little company, and he was scarcely spoken of. Far from regarding him as a man who required watching, having learned that he wished to go to Paris, I caused a passport to be procured for him, which he was to receive at Frankfort, and I never heard that this dangerous citizen had compromised the safety of the state in any way."<sup>53</sup>

Burr was suffering physically as well as mentally at the time. An ulcerated tooth drove him nearly frantic, and into the competent arms of a lady dentist. Also, "a lip which was bitten by a venomous animal on Friday last has swollen, and is very painful." The "venomous animal" seems to have been suspiciously two-legged and female in sex, for, narrates the Journal, "the origin of the thing is so ridiculous that I wished to hush it up; for the bite

was given in a paroxysm of great good humor."<sup>54</sup> Yet it took days for that bite to heal.

In spite of bite, in spite of toothache, Burr started for France on December 11, 1809. His journey took him first to Göttingen, where he met Karl Friedrich Gauss, the famous mathematician and Director of the Astronomical Observatory. He was taken through the observatory and the library, and was properly impressed. Then on to Cassel, Westphalia, where, as in every land and clime, the children trooped to him and adored him. He had a remarkable gift for capturing their fancy, for interesting himself in their little affairs. Little *Gampy*, his grandson, was constantly in his thoughts. He was forever sending him trinkets, toys, medals, old coins; whatever might interest the sturdy little boy — even when the purchase price meant the lack of a supper that night. At Cassel we find this charming entry in the Journal, expressive of much in Burr's character and the loyalty he inspired: "Dec. 28 — Yesterday I must have been possessed by the devil. A pretty little girl about 15 years old came into my room [at the post house] with a little *guitare* in her hand and muttering a few words in German began to sing and play. Could you imagine anything more calculated to fascinate me? I drove her rudely out. To be sure, I did give her a *gooden-groshen*, which was probably much more than she expected; but I was unkind. One minute after, I was sorry and sent for her, but she was not to be found; and I have been all day looking out for her in vain."<sup>55</sup>

But it was at Göttingen that he received most important news from Professor Heeren, with whom he had corresponded from the United States. It was nothing more or less than "the Emperor's assent to the independence of Mexico and the other Spanish colonies!" In great anguish of spirit Burr exclaimed, "Now, why the devil didn't he tell me of this two years ago?"<sup>56</sup> Two years before, when Burr was seeking aid through all the world for his imminent expedition against Mexico, and Napoleon as well as England had turned him coldly down. He had been two years too early. What thoughts must have coursed through his mind at the twists and ironic turns of Fate! With Napoleon's help he might now have been monarch of Mexico, ruler of Central and South America, one of the world's great, the arbiter of the destiny of millions. Instead, he was a threadbare little man, eating potatoes for lunch and supper, hardly knowing where his next meal would come from, a wanderer on the face of the earth, harried from pillar to post, subject to the vigilant attentions of the police in many lands, an object of scorn, suspicion and wrath.

But it was not in his nature to repine. More than ever was he determined to get to Paris. Napoleon favored the independence of the Spanish colonies? Very well; he had plans to submit, memorials to offer which might interest the Dictator of half of Europe.

On January 2, 1810, Burr was in Weimar. That little capital was then at the height of its glory, the intellectual center of Europe. In spite of his slightly shabby, though painfully elegant, clothes, in spite of his obvious poverty, he was welcomed at once into the innermost circles by the aristocracy of birth as well as that of the intellect. He met Frau von Stein, lady of the court, beloved of Goethe, and the Princess Caroline; he dined in state with Charles Augustus, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar and the genial patron of the glorious figures with whom he had surrounded himself; he was greeted by the royal family and the whole of that brilliant circle of wits, lovely ladies, and courtiers. Then he was introduced to Wieland, the poet; the wife of Knebel; Wilhelm, the brother of the great naturalist, Alexander von Humboldt; the mother of Schopenhauer, the philosopher of pessimism; and finally — the great, the overwhelming Goethe himself. Name after glittering name, until the reader is left breathless. And everywhere, in whatever company, Burr was an equal, a comrade, a man of taste, of breeding, of intellectual comprehension. What a pity that Burr chose this particular period to hurry his Diary, to avoid extended comments, to jot down, "but I must stop with details and only make short notes to talk from," that on the day he met Goethe, his whole comment should be, "this day would make about 200 pages if written out."<sup>57</sup> To cap the climax, he was never to talk from his notes to Theo, to any one; and his observations must forever remain buried in the grave at Princeton.

A complication arose at Weimar — an amatory one. A certain lady of the court — Mademoiselle de Reizenstein — had aroused in him a depth of passion of which he had no longer believed himself capable, and the passion had been reciprocated. On January 8, 1810, he packed his belongings in great haste and in utter secrecy, and fled incontinently from Weimar, never stopping for breath until he had reached Erfurt. Dates were left unfilled, friends, the Duke himself, were deserted without a word of farewell. That night he scribbled by candlelight, still shaken with the danger he had just escaped: she is "a sorceress," and "if I were President of the secret tribunal she should be burnt alive tomorrow. Another interview and I might have been lost, my hopes and projects blasted and abandoned."<sup>58</sup>

There could now be but one ruling passion in his life — Mexico.

Professor Heeren had opened up new vistas; he must get to Napoleon and strike while the iron was hot. The dazzling De Reizenstein would have married him, settled him down to a secure, graceful, elegant position in a German court. His ambitions were on a grander scale; they *must* be fulfilled.

From Erfurt he continued his breakneck flight to Gotha, as though he feared the siren might follow and he might weaken. There he was royally entertained by Ernst I, Duke of Saxe-Coburg, and met Bernard de Lindenau, Director of the Observatory, famous mathematician and astronomer, as well as Galletti, the historian. And, on January 18th, he was in Frankfort, where he settled down to await word from Paris on his application for a passport. Five days later, he was still waiting, "but there were advices from Paris concerning me extremely unfavorable, and requesting I might be advised by no means to hazard my person within the territories of France."<sup>59</sup> Nevertheless, he made the hazard, and on the 25th was in Mayence, in the sphere of French influence. No passport was forthcoming, and he was placed under a modified arrest pending disposition of his case from Paris. He found distant cousins here in Mayence, representing a branch of the Burr family which had settled in Holland more than a century before, and they did what they could to ease his condition. And, at the beginning of February, came good news. Paris had decided to grant him his passport, and he was free to proceed.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

## FAILURE IN FRANCE

## 1. PROPOSALS TO NAPOLEON

AARON BURR reached Paris on February 16, 1810. He wrote at once for an audience with the Duc de Cadore, the Minister of Foreign Relations, which was granted, and he submitted his plans. Then he retired to his shabby lodgings and waited for a reply. The wait was to be long and tiring. In the interval he renewed his acquaintance with Comte de Volney, scholar and author, and M. Adet, former French Minister to the United States, both of whom he had entertained in the days of affluence at Richmond Hill. There was also a joyful reunion with John Vanderlyn, the painter, to further whose genius Burr had given unstintedly of his time and money. Vanderlyn was famous now, and in a position to turn the tables in the matter of financial help. But Burr was singularly delicate in this respect. He had had no hesitation in borrowing vast sums from usurers and those to whom lending was a business procedure, but he resisted as long as possible borrowing — with little prospect of return — from those who were personal friends. Bentham, Lüning, whose draft he had cashed with the greatest reluctance only when he had not another *sou* in his pocket, and now Vanderlyn.

His first flush of optimism was slowly dying. He heard nothing from Cadore, French officialdom was cool, if not openly hostile, and his scanty funds were steadily growing less. So much so that on February 24th, he was reduced to "rice soup for dinner, 8 sous. Go out at 6. Bought bread and cheese." *But*, the same evening, he records "two rencounters, one good; another, the third, 13 francs! That's economy for you!"<sup>1</sup> Burr knew his own failings, but could not resist them. He had no money for food, but the cries of the flesh were irresistible.

A few days later Cadore informed him that he had appointed Deputy Louis Roux to treat with him concerning the proposals he had submitted to His Majesty, the Emperor. Burr dined with Roux several times, and recorded mournfully, "have no reason to believe that my business advances, or that I shall do anything here."<sup>2</sup> Officialdom grew more and more rude and overbearing, doors re-