

From the New York Evening Post.

TO THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.

The shocking catastrophe which has recently occurred, terminating the life of ALEXANDER HAMILTON, & which has spread a gloom over our city that will not be speedily dissipated, demands that the circumstances which led to it, or were intimately connected with it, should not be concealed from the world. When they shall be truly and fairly disclosed, however some may question the soundness of his judgment on this occasion, all must be ready to do justice to the purity of his views, and the nobleness of his nature. It will only here be added, that the authenticity of the documents and the accuracy of the information which we have at last obtained, are beyond any question; and must put an end to all mistake or misrepresentation.

The following is the correspondence that passed between General Hamilton and Colonel Burr, together with an explanation of the conduct, motives and views of General Hamilton, written with his own hand the evening before the meeting took place and only to have been seen in the deplorable event that followed.

No. 1.

New York, June 18, 1804.

SIR,

I sent for your perusal a letter signed Charles D. Cooper, which, though apparently published some time ago, has but very recently come to my knowledge. Mr. Van Ness who does me the favor to deliver this, will point out to you that clause of the letter to which I particularly request your attention.

You must perceive, Sir, the necessity of a prompt and unqualified acknowledgement or denial of the use of any expression which would warrant the assertion of Dr. Cooper.

I have the honor to be,
Your Obedient Serv't.

A. BURR.

General Hamilton.

No. 2.

New York, June 20th, 1804.

SIR,

I have maturely reflected on the subject of your letter of the 18th inst. and the more I have reflected, the more I have become convinced that I could not without manifest impropriety make the avowal or disavowal which you seem to think necessary. The clause pointed out by Mr. Van Ness is in these terms "I could detail to you a still more despicable opinion which Hamilton has expressed of Mr. Burr." To endeavour to discover the meaning of this declaration, I was obliged to seek in the antecedent part of this letter for the opinion to which it referred, as having been already disclosed: I found it in these words, "General Hamilton and Judge Kent have declared in substance, that they looked upon Mr. Burr to be a dangerous man and one who ought not to be trusted with the reins of government."

The language of Dr. Cooper plainly implies, that he considered this opinion of you, which he attributes to me, as a despicable one, but he affirms that I have expressed some other, still more despicable; without however, mentioning to whom, when, or where. This evident that the phrase "still more despicable" admits of infinite shades from very light to very dark. How am I to judge of the degree intended? or how shall I annex any precise idea to language so indefinite?

Between Gentlemen, despicable and more despicable are not worth the pains of a distinction: when therefore you do not interrogate me as to the opinion which is specifically ascribed to me, I must conclude, that you view it as within limits to which the animadversions of political opponents upon each other may justifiably extend, and consequently as not warranting the idea of it which Doctor Cooper appears to entertain. If so, what precise inference could you draw, as a guide for your conduct, were I to acknowledge that I had expressed an opinion of you still more despicable than the one which I have just mentioned? How could you be sure that even this opinion had exceeded the bounds which you would yourself deem admissible between political opponents?

But if I forbear further comment on the embarrassment, to which the requisition you have made naturally leads. The occasion forbids a more

ample illustration, though nothing could be more easy than to pursue it.

Repeating that I cannot reconcile it with propriety to make the acknowledgement or denial you desire, I will add that I deem it inadmissible on principle, to consent to be interrogated as to the justness of the inferences which may be drawn by others from what ever I may have said of a political opponent in the course of a fifteen years competition. If there were no other objection to it this is sufficient, that it would tend to expose my sincerity and delicacy to injurious imputations from every person who may at any time have conceived the import of my expressions, differently from what I may then have intended or may afterwards recollect. I stand ready to avow or disavow promptly and explicitly any precise or definite opinion which I may be charged with having declared of any Gentleman. More than this cannot fitly be expected from me; and especially it cannot be reasonably expected that I shall enter into an explanation upon a basis so vague as that which you have adopted. I trust on more reflection you will see the matter in the same light with me. If not, I can only regret the circumstance and must abide the consequences.

The publication of Doctor Cooper was never seen by me till after the receipt of your letter.

I have the honor to be, &c.

A. HAMILTON.

Col. Burr.

No. 3.

New York, 21st June, 1804.

SIR,

Your letter of the 20th instant has been this day received. Having considered it attentively I regret to find in it nothing of that sincerity and delicacy which you profess to value.

Political opposition can never absolve gentlemen from the necessity of a rigid adherence to the laws of honor, and the rules of decorum. I neither claim such privilege nor indulge it in others.

The common sense of mankind affixes to the epithet adopted by Dr. Cooper, the idea of dishonor. It has been publicly applied to me under the sanction of your name. The question is not, whether he has understood the meaning of the word, or has used it according to syntax, and with grammatical accuracy; but whether you have authorised this application, either directly or by uttering expressions or opinions derogatory to my honor. The time "when" is in your own knowledge, but no way material to me, as the calumny has now first been disclosed, so as to become the subject of my notice, and as the effect is present and palpable.

Your letter has furnished me with new reasons for requiring a definite reply.

I have the honor to be,

Sir, your obedient,

A. BURR.

GENERAL HAMILTON.

On Saturday the 22d of June, General Hamilton, for the first time, called on Mr. P. and communicated to him the preceding correspondence. He informed him that in a conversation with Mr. V. N. at the time of receiving the last letter, he told Mr. V. N. that he considered that letter as rude and offensive, and that it was not possible for him to give it any other answer than that Mr. Burr must take such steps as he might think proper. He said farther, that Mr. V. N. requested him to take time to deliberate, and then return an answer when he might possibly entertain a different opinion, and that he would call on him to receive it. That his reply to Mr. V. N. was, that he did not perceive it possible for him to give any other answer than that he had mentioned, unless Mr. Burr would take back his last letter and write one which would admit of a different reply. He then gave Mr. P. the letter hereafter mentioned of the 22d of June, to be delivered to Mr. V. N. when he should call on Mr. P. for an answer, and went to his country house.

The next day General Hamilton received, while there, the following letter.

No. 4.

June 23, 1804.

SIR,

In the afternoon of yesterday, I reported to Col. Burr the result of my last interview with you, and appointed the evening to receive his further instructions. Some private engagements, however, prevented me from calling on him till this morning: On my return to the city I found upon enquiry, both at your office and house, that you had returned to your residence in the country. Least an in-

terview there might be less agreeable to you than elsewhere; I have taken the liberty of addressing you this note to enquire when and where it will be most convenient to you to receive a communication.

Your most obt. and very humble

Serv't.

W. P. VAN NESS.

GENERAL HAMILTON.

Mr. P.—understood from General Hamilton that he immediately answered, that if the communication was pressing he would receive it at his Country House that day, if not, he would be at his house in town the next morning at nine o'clock. But he did not give Mr. P. any copy of this note.

No. 5.

New-York, June 22, 1804.

SIR,

Your first letter, in a style too peremptory, made a demand, in my opinion, unprecedented and unwarrantable. My answer, pointing out the embarrassment, gave you an opportunity to take a less exceptionable course. You have not chosen to do it, but by your last letter received this day, containing expressions indecorous and improper, you have increased the difficulties to explanation intrinsically incident to the nature of your application.

If by a "definite reply," you mean the direct avowal required in your first letter, I have no other answer to give, than that which has already been given. If you mean any thing different, admitting of greater latitude, it is requisite you should explain.

I have the honor to be,

Sir, your obedient serv't.

ALEX. HAMILTON.

AARON BURR, Esq.

This letter, although dated on the 23d June, remained in Mr. P.'s possession until the 25th, within which period he had several conversations with Mr. V. N. In these conversations Mr. P. endeavoured to illustrate and enforce the propriety of the ground General Hamilton had taken. Mr. P. mentioned to Mr. V. N. as the result, that if Col. Burr would write a letter, requesting to know in substance whether in the conversation to which Dr. Cooper alluded, any particular instance of dishonorable conduct was imputed to Col. Burr, or whether there was any impeachment of his private character, G. Hamilton would declare to the best of his recollection what passed in that conversation; and Mr. P. read to Mr. V. N. a paper containing the substance of what Gen. H. would say on that subject, which is as follows—

No. 6.

General Hamilton says he cannot imagine to what Dr. Cooper may have alluded unless it were to a conversation at Mr. Taylor's, in Albany, last winter (at which Mr. Taylor, he, and General H. were present) G. Hamilton cannot recollect distinctly the particulars of that conversation so as to undertake to repeat them, without running the risk of varying, or omitting what might be deemed important circumstances. The expressions are entirely forgotten, and the specific ideas imperfectly remembered; but to the best of his recollection it consisted of comments on the political principles and views of Col. Burr and the results that might be expected from them in the event of his election as Governor, without reference to any particular instance of past conduct, or to private character.

After the delivery of the Letter of the 22d, as above mentioned, in another interview with Mr. V. N. he desired Mr. P. to give him in writing the substance of what he had proposed on the part of General Hamilton, which Mr. P. did in the words following—

No. 7.

In answer to a letter properly adapted to obtain from General Hamilton a declaration whether he had charged Col. Burr with any particular instance of dishonorable conduct, or had impeached his private character, either in the conversation alluded to by Dr. Cooper, or in any other particular instance to be specified,

He would be able to answer consistently with his honor, and the truth, in substance, that the conversation to which Dr. Cooper alluded, turned wholly on political topics, and did not attribute to Col. Burr any instance of dishonorable conduct, nor relate to his private character; and in relation to any other language or conversation of General H. which Col. Burr will specify, a prompt and frank avowal or denial will be given.

On the 26th June Mr. P. received the following letter:

No. 8.

SIR,
The letter which you yesterday delivered me and your subsequent commu-

nication, in Col. Burr's opinion evince no disposition on the part of Gen. Hamilton to come to a satisfactory accommodation. The injury complained of and the reparation expected, are so definitely expressed in Col. Burr's letter of the 21st inst. that there is not perceived a necessity for further explanation on his part. The difficulty that would result from confining the enquiry to any particular times

& occasions must be manifest. The denial of a specified conversation only, would leave strong implications that on other occasions improper language had been used.—When and where injurious opinions and expressions have been uttered by General Hamilton must be best known to him, and of him only will Col. Burr enquire. No denial or declaration will be satisfactory, unless it be general, so as derogatory to Col. Burr's honor have originated with General Hamilton or have been fairly inferred from any thing he has said. A definite reply to a requisition of this nature was demanded by Col. Burr's letter of the 21st instant. This being refused invites the alternative alluded to in General Hamilton's letter of the 20th.

It was required by the position in which the controversy was placed by General Hamilton on Friday last, and I was immediately furnished with a communication demanding a personal interview. The necessity of this measure has not in the opinion of Col. Burr been diminished by the General's last letter, or any communication which has since been received. I am consequently again instructed to deliver you a message, as soon as it may be convenient for you to receive it. I beg therefore you will be so good as to inform me at what hour I can have the pleasure of seeing you.

Your most obedient, and

very humble servant,

W. P. VAN NESS.

Nathaniel Pendleton, Esq.

June 26th.

No. 9.

26th June 1804.

SIR,

I have communicated the letter which you did me the honor to write to me of this date to Gen. Hamilton. The expectations now disclosed on the part of Col. Burr appear to him to have greatly extended the original ground of enquiry, and instead of presenting a particular and definite case for explanation seem to aim at nothing less than an inquisition into his most confidential conversations, as well as others, through the whole period of his acquaintance with Col. Burr.

While he was prepared to meet the particular case fairly and fully, he thinks it inadmissible that he should be expected to answer at large as to every thing that he may possibly have said, in relation to the character of Col. Burr, at any time or upon any occasion. Though he is not conscious that any charges which are in circulation to the prejudice of Col. Burr have originated with him, except one which may have been so considered, & which has long since been fully explained between Col. Burr and himself—yet he cannot consent to be questioned generally as to any rumours which may be affixed derogatory to the character of Col. Burr without specification of the several rumours, many of them probably unknown to him. He does not however mean to authorise any conclusion as to the real nature of his conduct in relation to Col. Burr, by his declining so loose and vague a basis of explanation, and he disavows an unwillingness to come to a satisfactory, provided it be an honorable accommodation. His objection is, the very indefinite ground, which Col. Burr has assumed, in which he is sorry to be able to discern nothing short of predetermined hostility. Presuming therefore that it will be adhered to, he has instructed me to receive the message which you have in charge to deliver. For this purpose I shall be at home and at your command to-morrow morning from eight to ten o'clock.

I have the honor to be respectfully
your obedient servant,
NATHANIEL PENDLETON.

William P. Van Ness, Esq.

No. 10.

SIR,

The letter which I had the honor to receive from you, under the date of yesterday, states among other things, that in Gen. Hamilton's opinion, Col. Burr has taken a very indefinite ground, in which he evinces nothing short of predetermined hostility, and that Gen. Hamilton thinks it inadmissible that the enquiry should extend to his confidential as well as other conversations. In this Col. Burr can only reply, that the secret whispers traducing his fame, and impeaching his honor, are, at least, equally injurious with slanders publicly uttered; that Gen. Hamilton, had, at no time, and in no place, a right to use any such injurious expressions; and that the partial negative he is disposed to give, with the reservations he wishes to make, are proofs that he has done the injury specified.

Col. Burr's request was, in the first instance, proposed in a form the most simple, in order that General Hamilton might give to the affair that course to which he might be induced by his temper and his knowledge of facts. Col. Burr trusted with confidence, that from the frankness of a soldier and the candour of a gentleman, he might expect an ingenuous declaration. That if, as he had

reason to believe, Gen. Hamilton had used expressions derogatory to his honor, he would have had the magnanimity to retract them; and that if, from his language, injurious inferences had been improperly drawn, he would have perceived the propriety of correcting errors, which might thus have been widely diffused. With those impressions, Col. Burr was greatly surprised at receiving a letter which he considered as evasive, and which in manner he deemed not altogether decorous. In one expectation, however, he was not wholly deceived, for the close of Gen. Hamilton's letter contained an intimation that, if Col. Burr should dislike his refusal to acknowledge or deny, he was ready to meet the consequences. This Col. Burr deemed a sort of defiance, and would have felt justified in making it the basis of an immediate message. But as the communication contained something concerning the indefiniteness of the request; as he believed it rather the offspring of false pride than of reflection, and as he felt the utmost reluctance to proceed to extremities, while any other remained, his request was repeated in terms more explicit. The replies and propositions on the part of Gen. Hamilton have in Col. Burr's opinion been constantly in substance the same.

Col. Burr disavows all motives of predetermined hostility, a charge by which he thinks himself added to injury.—He feels as a gentleman should feel when his honor is impeached or assailed, and without sensations of hostility or wishes of revenge, he is determined to vindicate that honor at such hazard as the nature of the case demands.

The length to which this correspondence has extended, only tending to prove that the satisfactory redress, earnestly desired cannot be obtained, he deems it useless to offer any proposition except the simple message which I shall now have the honor to deliver.

I have the honor to be,

With great respect,

Your obedient and very

humble servant,

W. P. VAN NESS.

Wednesday morning,

June 27th, 1804.

With this letter, a message was received, such as was to be expected, containing an invitation, which was accepted, and Mr. P. informed Mr. V. N. he should hear from him the next day as to further particulars.

This letter was delivered to Gen. H. on the same evening, and a very short conversation ensued between him and Mr. P. who was to call on him early the next morning for a further conference.—When he did so, Gen. Hamilton said he had not understood whether the message & answer was definitely concluded, or whether another meeting was to take place for that purpose between Mr. P. and Mr. V. N. Under the latter impression, and as the last letter contained matter that naturally led to animadversion, he gave Mr. P. a paper of remarks in his own hand writing, to be communicated to Mr. V. N. if the state of the affair rendered it proper.

In the farther interview with Mr. V. N. that day, after explaining the causes which had induced Gen. Hamilton to suppose that the state of the affair did not render it improper, he offered this paper to Mr. V. N.—but he declined receiving it, alleging, that he considered the correspondence as closed by the acceptance of the message that he had delivered.

Mr. P. informed Mr. V. N. of the inducements mentioned by General Hamilton in those remarks, for the postponing the meeting until the close of the Circuit; and as this was uncertain, Mr. P. was to let him know when it would be convenient.

On Friday the 6th of July, the Circuit being closed, Mr. P. gave this information, and that Gen. Hamilton would be ready at any time after the Sunday following. On Monday the particulars were arranged, and the public are but too well acquainted with the sad result.

The paper above alluded to is as follows:—

No. 11.

Remarks on the letter of June 27, 1804.

Whether the observations on this letter are designed merely to justify the result which is indicated in the close of the letter, or may be intended to give an opening for rendering any thing explicit which may have been deemed vague heretofore, can only be judged of by the sequel. At any rate it appears to me necessary not to be misunderstood. Mr. Pendleton is, therefore, authorised to say that in the course of the present discussion, written or verbal, there has been no intention to evade, defy, or insult, but a sincere disposition to avoid extremities, if it could be done with propriety. With this view Gen. H. has been ready to enter into a frank and free explanation on any and every object of a specific nature; but not to answer a general and abstract inquiry, embracing a period too long for any accurate recollection, and exposing him to unpleasant criticisms from or unpleasant discussions with any and every person, who may have understood him in an unfavorable sense. This (admitting that he could answer in a manner the most satisfactory to Col. Burr) he should deem inadmissible, in principle and precedent, and humiliating in practice. To this therefore he can never submit. Fre-