all strong characters, retaining something of the fiery, obstinate, north-of-Ireland disposition, which their ancestor brought with him from over the sea, in 1719. They were thorough whigs all of them, though, it was said, the founder of the family was a royalist in the time of Charles I., and fled to Ireland to avoid the enmity of the Roundheads.

"Then there were the Schuylers, with General Schuyler at their head, and Alexander Hamilton, his son-in-law, for ornament and champion. * * * * General Schuyler had been a competitor with George Clinton for the governorship in 1777, and his disappointment, it was thought, was still very fresh in the general's recollection.

"But there was a third family in the state, which, merely as a family, was more important than the Clintons or the Schuylers. This was the Livingston family—rich, numerous, and influential. At that time there were nine members of the family in public life—politicians, judges, clergymen, lawyers—of whom several were of national celebrity. * * * * The Livingstons had been rooted in the state for more than a hundred years, and the circle of their connections embraced a great proportion of the leading people. * * * *

"These were the three families. The Clintons had *power*, the Livingstons had *numbers*, the Schuylers had *Hamilton*. Neither of the three was strong enough to overcome the other two united, and any two united could triumph over the third.

"Such statements as these must of course be taken with proper allowance. A thousand influences enter into politics, and general statements are only outline truths. Nevertheless, in a state where only freeholders have a vote, and where there are not more than twelve or fourteen thousand freeholders, the influence of great families, if wielded by men of force and talent, will be, in the long run, and in great crises, controlling. It was so in the state of New York for twenty years after the Revolution.

"For some years after coming to New York, Colonel Burr held aloof from these factions. Absorbed in the practice of his profession and the education of his family, he was not reckoned among the politicians. And when, at length, he entered the political field, it was not as an ally of either of the families, but as an independent power, profiting by their dissensions, wielded the influence of two to crush the more obnoxious third. He had a party of his own that served him instead of family connections. Gradually certain young men of the town, who had nothing to hope from the ruling power, ambitious like himself, were drawn into his circle, and inspired with his own energy and resolution. They were devoted to their chief, of whose abilities they had an extravagant opinion. In every quarter they sounded the praises of the man, who, they said, was the bravest soldier, the ablest lawyer, and the most accomplished gentleman of his