

“General Hamilton seems to have read his doom in that letter. He said to Mr. Van Ness, who brought it, that it was such a letter as he had hoped not to receive; it contained several offensive expressions, and it seemed to close the door to a reply. He had hoped that Mr. Burr would have desired him to state what had fallen from him that might have given rise to the inference of Doctor Cooper. He would have done that frankly, and he believed it would not have been found to exceed justifiable limits. And even then, if Mr. Burr was disposed to give another turn to the discussion, he was willing to consider his letter undelivered. But if that were not withdrawn, he could make no reply.”

General Hamilton however did indite an answer to Colonel Burr's letter, and placed it in the hands of Mr. Nathaniel Pendleton, to be delivered. He wrote: “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 in 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 or disavowal required in your first letter, I have no other answer to give than that which has already been given. If you mean anything different, admitting of greater latitude, it is requisite you should explain.”

Other letters and answers were written. Finally a challenge was sent and accepted. The seconds, Mr. William P. van Ness and Mr. Nathaniel Pendleton, “conferred several times before the final arrangements were concluded, but, at length the eleventh of July, at seven in the morning, was fixed upon as the time; the place, Wechawken; the weapons, pistols; the distance, ten paces.”

“On the fourth of July, Hamilton and Burr met, for the last time, at a convivial board. It was at the annual banquet of the Society of the Cincinnati, of which Hamilton was president and Burr a member. Hamilton was cheerful, and, at times, merry. He was urged, as the feast wore away, to sing the only song he ever sang or knew, the famous old ballad of *The Drum*. It was thought afterward, that he was more reluctant than usual to comply with the company's request; but after some delay, he said, ‘Well, you shall have it,’ and sang it in his best manner, greatly to the delight of the old soldiers by whom he was surrounded. Burr, on the contrary, was reserved, mingled little with the company, and held no intercourse with the president. He was never a fluent man, and was generally, in the society of men, more a listener than a talker. On this occasion, his silence was, therefore, the less remarked; yet it was remarked. It was observed, too, that he paid no attention to Hamilton's conversation, nor, indeed, looked toward him until he struck up his song,