

statesman, as a vice-president of the United States, would not lack the lustre to which his services as such entitle it, had circumstances placed him beyond the blight of the instigations and treachery of General James Wilkinson, commander-in-chief of the army of the United States in 1805. Both had won distinction for valor on the heights of Quebec, and had, about the beginning of this century, begun corresponding in ciphers, used as early as 1794, by General Wilkinson.¹

In order to show the grounds on which the above declaration is founded, the following *excerpta* are presented the reader from the works of several authoritative historians :

“ Few of the millions who now populate the valley of the Mississippi are familiar, even by tradition, with the difficulties which attended its early colonization. While the states of the Atlantic had engaged the energies of the government [of the United States of America], the pioneers of the wilderness had been seriously neglected. That young and fertile region lay yet an unbroken forest but sparsely inhabited, and separated from the sea-board by interminable mountains and boundless solitudes. Shut out from the avenues of trade, it contributed nothing to the resources of the government, then much reduced by the [war of the] Revolution, and the demands of its citizens were regarded as burthens to the state, and useless exactions from the public treasury. Nature, it is true, had supplied it with those noble rivers, now the great arteries of trade, but the arbitrary interdict of Spain had closed them against the enterprise and energy of the people.

“ The navigation of the Mississippi had been a fruitful source of complaint almost from the first occupation of the territory. Favorites had been rewarded by the authorities of Louisiana, but even these had been compelled to contribute to the Spanish crown. Congress had frequently been solicited to assert the rights of the people whose prosperity was retarded by the restrictive intercourse of trade, yet such was the embarrassment of the government, they could but faintly hope for relief, and that, if at all, at a distant day, and under many disabilities.

“ The murmurings of discontent, which thus far had been comparatively but faintly heard, began now to assume a more threatening tone. Those who had been most loyal in their affection for the republic faltered in their allegiance to the confederation. The government had been admonished of a rupture of the Union, and a forcible alliance with a rival power. Measures of relief had been seriously determined on, but the manner of their accomplishment was a subject of no little diversity of opinion. While some advocated the separate organization of a new republic, independent of the United States and closely allied with

¹ The Blennerhassett papers. By William H. Safford, 1864. Appendix, pp. 657, 660.