

Clark and Dunn. I was then informed by Governor Miro that the opening of the trade of the Mississippi to the western inhabitants had been approved by his court, and that permission for the settlement of American emigrants had been granted, but he informed me he had received no advice on the subject of our plan of colonization, or the tobacco speculation. I returned to Kentucky, and pursued the trade in which I was engaged until 1791, when disgusted by disappointments and misfortunes, the effect of my ignorance of commerce, I resumed the sword of my country in December of the same year. \* \* \* \*

“In these transactions I can speak only of my own motives and actions, and by them I am persuaded I shall be judged. From the character under which I approached the governor and the intendant of Louisiana, and the tenor of my whole conduct, it is not probable that they should have proposed to me any measure of dishonor, yet it is reasonable to presume that they had duties and obligations to consult as well as myself, and while our personal interests were made subservient, it was fair that they should play back upon me my own game, to the best advantage a distinct policy might suggest. *I deny the right of any power in existence to question me for my negotiations with the governor of Louisiana in 1787.* And I am satisfied impartial posterity will render justice to the personal enterprise, and pecuniary sacrifices, by which I contributed more essentially to advance the fortunes of the western people than any other individual of my country; nor will it be denied, when my enemies are forgotten, that the projects for which I am now charged with traitorous designs, had a direct tendency to accelerate the annexation of Louisiana to the United States.”<sup>1</sup>

Such were the projects, the explanations, and the denials of General James Wilkinson, the author and promoter of the plots which brought upon the reputation of Aaron Burr all the odiousness which defamed him as a conspirator and a filibuster. Nowhere can one find a clearer mirror in which is reflected the traits of General Wilkinson's scheming disposition and his brilliant audacity in charging others with intentions and acts that had their origin in his own fertile mind than in that biographic apology entitled “Memoirs of his own times,” written by himself. The art of his diplomacy is never more blindingly luminous and enigmatical than in his interpretations and elucidations of the cipher communications presented in that work to establish his rectitude and loyalty. It was not difficult for him, so astute in chicanery, to deceive and dominate so serviceable a person as Aaron Burr by representations of speedy access to wealth and rapid elevation to heights of rank and power.

The first premonitory evidence of General Wilkinson's purpose to revive and further the project which he had from motives of self-interest abandoned in

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of my own times. By General James Wilkinson. Philadelphia, 1816, vol. ii, pp. 112-114.