

together. Its main purport was that Blennerhassett was too much of a man to be satisfied with the commonplace delights of rural seclusion. He should aspire to a career in which his powers would be employed. His fortune, already impaired, would gradually dwindle away, and his children be left destitute. The world is wide; he should go forth from his enervating solitude in pursuit of fortune and honour.

“The letter produced precisely the effect intended. Flattered by the notice of a distinguished man, anxious for his decaying fortune, fired with a desire for distinction, Blennerhassett replied that he should be glad to participate in any enterprise in which Colonel Burr might think proper to embark.”

In answer to the letter written him, on the twenty-first of December, by Blennerhassett, Colonel Burr wrote him from Washington, on the fifteenth of April, 1806, saying:

“The confidence you have been pleased to place in me is extremely flattering, and it would seem that there has been, without explanation, a sort of consent between our minds. In a matter of so much moment, and on which I am so imperfectly informed, it would be hazarding too much to offer advice; yet it is due to the frankness of your letter, to acknowledge that *I had projected, and still meditate a speculation, precisely of the character you have described.* It would have been submitted to your consideration in October last, if I had then the good fortune to find you at home. The business, however, depends, in some degree, on contingencies, not within my control, and will not be commenced before December or January, if ever. From this circumstance, and as the matter, in its present state, cannot be satisfactorily explained by letter, the communication will be deferred until a personal interview can be had. With this view I pray to be informed of your intended movements the ensuing season, and in case you should visit Orleans, at what time, and at what port you may be expected on the Atlantic coast. But I must insist that these intimations be not permitted to interrupt the prosecution of any plans which you have formed for yourself—no occupation which shall not take you off the continent can interfere with which that I may propose.”

“As the spring advanced, affairs in the southwest looked more and more threatening. The Spaniards added aggression to insolence. It had been agreed between the two governments [the United States and Spain] that until the boundary line [demarcating their respective domains] should be settled by negotiation, each party should retain its posts, but establish no new ones, nor make any military movements whatever within the limits in dispute. But after making several petty encroachments, the Spanish commander, early in June, advanced a force of twelve hundred men to within twenty miles of Nachitoches. Instantly, General Wilkinson took measures for the defence of the frontier.