

He had only six hundred regulars under his command, most of whom were hurried forward to the scene of expected warfare. Every militiaman in the West was refurbishing his accoutrements, and awaiting the summons to the field. On the fourth of July, 1806, there were not a thousand persons in the United States who did not think war with Spain inevitable, impending, begun! The country desired it. A blow from Wilkinson, a word from Jefferson, would have let loose the dogs of war, given us Texas, and changed the history of the two continents.

“But Napoleon, now stalking toward the summit of his power, had intimated that a declaration of war against Spain *would be considered a declaration of war against him*. Pitt, his great enemy, had just died. For the moment, Napoleon’s word was law everywhere in the world, out of the range of British cannon.”

About this time, “in Mr. Burr’s opinion, Wilkinson became alarmed, and resolved on an abandonment of the enterprise at the sacrifice of his associates.” With a view of assuring Wilkinson that the project might be successfully prosecuted after a short interval, Colonel Burr addressed him a communication, on the sixteenth of April, saying:

“The execution of *our project* is postponed till December: want of water in Ohio rendered movement impracticable; other reasons rendered delay expedient. *The association is enlarged, and comprises all that Wilkinson could wish. Confidence limited to a few.*

“*Though this delay is irksome, it will enable us to move with more certainty and dignity.*

“Burr will be throughout the United States this summer. Administration is damned, which Randolph aids.

“Burr wrote you a long letter last December, replying to a short one deemed very silly. Nothing has been heard from Brigadier since October. Is Cusion *et Portes* right? Address Burr at Washington.”

The designation “Brigadier,” signified Wilkinson; “Cusion,” Colonel Thomas H. Cushing commanding the second regiment of infantry under Brigadier-General Wilkinson; and Portes, Major Porter, also under his command.

The “traitorous diplomacy” of General Wilkinson had now a fair field in which to display its nefarious skill. “The extraordinary and unintelligible language of this letter of the sixteenth of April,” as he pretentiously declared, “staggered my confidence.” The inquiry: “Is Cusion *et Portes* right?” as he speciously argued, “seemed to be intended, *in case of a discovery, merely to implicate me.*” The letter, as he was fain to confess, placed him “in a situation of most painful perplexity and suspense.” But he was too crafty to be long awed by his questioning fears. His fertile mind quickly outlined a scheme