

arming themselves for the same, contrary to the laws, in such cases made and provided."<sup>1</sup>

The names of the persons connected with this mysterious "*military expedition or enterprise against the dominions of Spain*" are not disclosed in the president's proclamation, nor are those of the places "in the western waters of the United States" where such persons were "organizing, officering and arming themselves for the same." These omissions strikingly manifest the consummate ability of General Wilkinson to forecast the success of the purposes he had in view when he planned the downfall of Aaron Burr, and his own release from bearing a part of the opprobrium that would thereafter disgrace his associate. He readily divined the consequences that would follow President Jefferson's interpretation of his confidential communication, and the controlling force of the assertion: "*I am not only uninformed of the prime mover and ultimate objects of this daring enterprise, but am ignorant of the foundation on which it rests, of the means by which it is to be supported, and whether any immediate or collateral protection, internal or external, is expected.*"

The reader should remember that the things of which General Wilkinson wrote to President Jefferson had their origin and action on or before the twenty-second day of October, 1806, prior to the departure of the general's dispatch-bearer from Natchitoches.

Assuming the character of "deliverer of his country," General Wilkinson went to the Sabine, patched up an arrangement with the Spaniards, put everything in train for the withdrawal of the troops (who retired cursing the general for ordering them away from an enemy they were eager to engage), sent forward an officer to begin the work of preparing New Orleans for defence, and, on the 24th of November, arrived there himself to deliver a devoted province from spoliation and ruin.

"Prodigious was his zeal, enormous were his labors, terrible and ridiculous was the excitement he created. The current belief was, that the 'conspiracy' extended from one end of the Union to the other, embracing immense numbers of the most wealthy and influential citizens; that seven thousand armed men were on their way to the scene; and that Burr, with a vanguard of two thousand, was then descending the river, and might be expected at any moment to fall upon the town; that the city swarmed with his adherents, who only awaited his arrival to throw off the mask, and assist in the reduction of the place. Martial law was proclaimed. Wilkinson dispatched a lieutenant to the British admiral at Jamaica, and put him on his guard against Burr's emissaries. A public meeting was held, at which Wilkinson harangued the excited multitude, and gave them a narrative of Swartwout's mission, and

<sup>1</sup> Memoirs of his own times. By General James Wilkinson, vol. ii., appendix, docs. xcvi., xcvi.