

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

T H U R S D A Y, F E B R U A R Y 5, 1807.

Maryland Gazette.

ANNAPOLIS, THURSDAY, February 5, 1807.

WASHINGTON CITY, January 29.

MESSAGES.

To the senate and house of representatives of the United States.

I RECEIVED from general Wilkinson, on the 23d instant, his affidavit, charging Samuel Swartwout, Peter V. Ogden, and James Alexander, with the crimes described in the affidavit, a copy of which is now communicated to both houses of congress.

It was announced to me at the same time, that Swartwout and Bollman, two of the persons apprehended by him, were arrived in the city, in custody each of a military officer. I immediately delivered to the attorney of the U. States in this district, the evidence received against them, with instruction to lay the same before the judges, and to apply for their process to bring the accused to justice; and I put into his hand orders to the officers having them in custody, to deliver them to the marshal on his application.

TH: JEFFERSON.

January 26, 1807.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States.

By the letters of capt. Bissel, who commands at Fort Mifflin, and of Mr. Marrell, to general Jackson, of Tennessee, copies of which are now communicated to congress, it will be seen that Aaron Burr passed Fort Mifflin on the 31st of December, with about ten boats, navigated by about six hands each, without any military appearance; and that three boats with ammunition were said to have been arrested, by the militia at Louisville.

As the guards of militia posted on various points of the Ohio, will be able to prevent any further aids passing through that channel, should any be attempted, we may now estimate with tolerable certainty, the means derived from the Ohio and its waters, towards the accomplishment of the purposes of Mr. Burr.

TH: JEFFERSON.

January 28, 1807.

The following is the deposition made in open court, by WILLIAM EATON, Esquire.

Early last winter, col. Aaron Burr, late vice-president of the United States, signified to me, at this place, that, under the authority of the general government, he was organizing a secret expedition against the Spanish provinces on our south-western borders; which expedition he was to lead, and in which he was authorized to invite me to take the command of a division. I had never before been personally acquainted with col. Burr; and, having for many years been employed in foreign service, I knew but little about the estimation this gentleman now held in the opinion of his countrymen and his government: the rank and confidence by which he had so lately been distinguished left me no right to suspect his patriotism. I knew him a soldier, in case of a war with the Spanish nation, which from the tenor of the President's message to both houses of congress seemed probable, I should have thought it my duty to obey to honourable a call of my country; and, under that impression I did engage to embark in the expedition. I had frequent interviews with col. Burr in this city—and, for a considerable time, his object seemed to be to instruct me by maps, and other information, the feasibility of penetrating to Mexico—always carrying forward the idea that the measure was authorized by government. At length, sometime in February, he began by degrees to unveil himself. He reproached the government with want of character, want of gratitude, and want of justice. He seemed delirious of irritating resentment in my breast by dilating on certain injuries he felt I had suffered from reflections made on the floor of the house of representatives concerning my operations in Barbary, and from the delays of government in adjusting my claims for disbursements on that coast during my consular agency at Tunis; and he said he would point me to an honourable mode of indemnity. I now began to entertain a suspicion that Mr. Burr was projecting an unauthorized military expedition; which, to me, was enveloped in mystery; and, desirous to draw an explanation from him, I suffered him to suppose me resigned to his counsel. He now laid open his project of revolutionizing the western country, separating it from the union, establishing a monarchy there, of which he was to be the sovereign, New-Orleans to be his capital; organizing a force on the waters of the Mississippi, and extending conquest to Mexico. I suggested a number of impediments to his scheme—such as the republican habits of the

citizens of that country, and their affection towards our present administration of government; the want of funds; the resistance he would meet from the regular army of the United States on those frontiers; and the opposition of Miranda in case he should succeed to republicanize the Mexicans.

Mr. Burr found no difficulty in removing these obstacles—he said he had, the preceding season, made a tour through that country, and had secured the attachment of the principal citizens of Kentucky, Tennessee and Louisiana, to his person and his measures—declared he had inexhaustible resources to funds; assured me the regular army would act with him, and would be reinforced by ten or twelve thousand men from the above mentioned states and territory and from other parts of the union; said he had powerful agents in the Spanish territory—and, as for Miranda, said Mr. Burr, we must hang Miranda. He now proposed to give me the second command in his army. I asked him who should have the chief command? He said, General Wilkinson. I observed it was singular that he should count on general Wilkinson: the elevated rank and high trust he now held as commander in chief of our army and governor of a province, he would hardly put at hazard for any precarious prospects of aggrandisement. Mr. Burr said, general Wilkinson balanced in the confidence of go-

vernment, and the confidence of the people, which consideration he now enjoyed, and was consequently prepared to secure to himself a permanency: I asked Mr. Burr if he knew general Wilkinson? He answered yes; and echoed the question. I said I knew him well. "What do you know of him?" said Mr. Burr. I know, I replied, that general Wilkinson will act as Lieutenant to no man in existence. "You are in an error," said Mr. Burr—"Wilkinson will act as lieutenant to me." From the tenor of repeated conversations with Mr. Burr, I was induced to believe the plan of separating the union which he had contemplated had been communicated to, and approved of, by general Wilkinson, (though I now suspect it an artful argument of seduction) and he often expressed a full confidence that the general's influence; the offer of double pay and double rations; the prospect of plunder and the ambition of achievement would draw the army into his measures. Mr. Burr talked of the establishment of an independent government west of the Allegany as a matter of inherent, constitutional right of the people; a change which would eventually take place, and for the operation of which the present crisis was peculiarly favourable.

There was, said he, no energy in the government to be dreaded, and the divisions of political opinions throughout the union was a circumstance of which we should profit. There were very many enterprising men among us who aspired to something beyond the dull pursuits of civil life, and who would volunteer in this enterprise, and the vast territory belonging to the United States, which offered to adventurers, and the mines of Mexico, would bring strength to his standard from all quarters. I listened to the exposition of col. Burr's views with seeming acquiescence. Every interview convinced me more and more that he had organized a deep laid plot of treason in the west, in the accomplishment of which he felt fully confident. Till, at length, I discovered that his ambition was not bounded by the waters of the Mississippi and Mexico, but that he meditated overthrowing the present government of our country. He said if he could gain over the marine corps, and secure the naval commanders, Truxton, Preble, Decatur and others, he would turn congress neck and heels out of doors; assassinate the President; seize on the treasury and the navy, and declare himself the protector of an energetic government. The honourable trust of corrupting the marine corps, and of founding commodore Preble and captain Decatur col. Burr proposed confiding to me. Shocked at this proposition, I dropped the mask, and exclaimed against his views. He talked of the degraded situation of our country, and the necessity of a blow by which its energy and its dignity should be restored—said if that blow could be struck here at this time, he was confident of the support of the best blood of America. I told col. Burr he deceived himself in presuming that he, or any other man could excite a party in this country who would countenance him in such a plot of desperation, murder and treason. He replied, that he, perhaps, knew better the dispositions of the influential citizens of this country than I did. I told him, one solitary word would destroy him. He asked, what word? I answered, Usurper! He smiled at my hesitation, and quoted some great examples in his favour. I observed to him, that I had lately travelled from one extreme of the union to the other; and, though I found a diversity of political opinion among the people, they appeared united at the most distant aspect of national danger. That, for the secession of the union to which I belonged, I would vouch, should he succeed in the first instance here, he would within six

weeks afterward have his throat cut by Yankee militia.

Though wild and extravagant Mr. Burr's last project; and though fraught with premeditated slaughter, I felt very easy on the subject, because its defeat he had deposited in my own hands. I did not feel so secure concerning that of disjoining the Union. But the very interesting and embarrassing situation in which his communications placed me, left me, I confess, at a stand to know how to conduct myself with propriety. He had committed no overt act of aggression against law. I could draw nothing from him in writing; nor could I learn that he had exposed his plans to any person near me by whom my testimony could be supported. He had mentioned to me no persons who were principally engaged with him except general Wilkinson—a Mr. Allison, who I found was his son-in-law—and a Mr. Ephraim Kibby, late a captain of Rangers in general Wayne's army. Satisfied that Mr. Burr was resolute in pushing his project of rebellion in the west of the Allegany, and apprehensive that it was too well and too extensively organized to be easily suppressed; though I dreaded the weight of this character when laid in the balance against my solitary assertion, I brought myself to the resolution to endeavour to defeat it by getting him removed from among us, or to expose myself to all consequences by a disclosure of his intentions. Accordingly I waited on the president of the United States; and after some desultory conversation, in which I aimed to draw his view to the westward, I used the freedom to say to the president I thought Mr. Burr should be sent out of this country—and gave for reason, that I believed him dangerous in it. The president asked where he should be sent? I mentioned London and Cadiz. The president thought the trust too important, and seemed to entertain a doubt of Mr. Burr's integrity. I intimated that no one, perhaps, had stronger grounds to mistrust Mr. Burr's moral integrity than myself; yet, I believed, ambition so much predominated over him that, when placed on an eminence and put on his honour, respect to himself would ensure his fidelity: His talents were unquestionable. I perceived the subject was disagreeable to the President; and to give it the shortest course to the point, declared my concern that if Mr. Burr were not in some way disposed of, we should, within eighteen months have an insurrection, if not a revolution on the waters of the Mississippi. The president answered, that he had too much confidence in the information, the integrity, and the attachment to the union of the citizens of that country to admit an apprehension of the kind. I am happy that events prove this confidence well placed. As no interrogatories followed my expression of alarm I thought silence on the subject, at that time and place, became me. But I detailed, about the same time, the whole projects of Mr. Burr to certain members of congress. They believed col. Burr capable of any thing—and agreed that the fellow ought to be hanged; but thought his projects too chimerical and his circumstances too desperate to give the subject the merit of serious consideration. The total security of feeling in those to whom I had rung the tocsin induced me to suspect my own apprehensions unreasonable, or at least too deeply admitted; and, of course, I grew indifferent about the subject.

Mr. Burr's visits to me became less frequent, and his conversation less familiar. He appeared to have abandoned the idea of a general revolution; but seemed determined on that of the Mississippi; and, although I could perceive symptoms of distrust in him towards me, he manifested great solicitude to engage me with him in the enterprise. Weary of his importunity, and at once to convince him of my serious attachments, I gave the following toast to the public:—"The United States—Falsey to the brain that should plot to dismember, and leprosy to the hand that will not draw to defend our Union!"

I doubt whether the sentiment was better understood by any of my acquaintance than col. Burr. Our intercourse ended here—we met but seldom afterward. I returned to my farm in Massachusetts, and thought no more of Mr. Burr, nor his empire, till sometime late in September or beginning of October, when a letter from Morris Belknap, of Marrietta, to Timothy E. Danielson, fell into my hands at Brimfield, which satisfied me that Mr. Burr had actually commenced his preparatory operations on the Ohio. I now spoke publicly of the fact—transmitted a copy of the letter from Belknap to the department of state, and about the same time forwarded through the hands of the postmaster-general to the president of the United States, a statement in substance, of what is here above detailed concerning the Mississippi conspiracy of the said col. Aaron Burr,—which is said to have been the first formal intelligence received by the executive on the subject of the conspirator being in motion.

I know not whether my country will allow me the merit of correctness of conduct in this affair. The