

CHAPTER IX.

THE PLOTS OF GENERAL JAMES WILKINSON.

1787-1807.

THE nomination of Aaron Burr, vice-president of the United States, on the eighteenth of February, 1804, as an independent candidate for governor of the state of New York, by "a small caucus of members of the legislature," was followed in a few days thereafter by the nomination of Morgan Lewis, chief justice of the Supreme Court of the State, for that office by the republican-democratic party. To insure the defeat of Burr, the federalists made no choice of a candidate.

Vice-President Burr writing, on the twenty-eighth of March, from Albany, to his daughter, remarks: "They are very busy here about an election between Morgan Lewis and A. Burr, the former supported by the Livingstons and Clintons, the latter *per se* [A. Burr]. The thing began yesterday and will terminate to-morrow. * * * * Both parties claim majorities, but there never was, in my opinion, an election, of the result of which so little judgment could be formed."

About thirty-five thousand votes were given to Lewis, and about twenty-eight thousand to Burr.

During the campaign, Doctor Charles D. Cooper, of Albany, wrote a letter to a friend, which was made public by a number of newspapers. Two sentences in it stigmatized the less popular candidate:

"General Hamilton and Judge Kent have declared, in substance, that they looked upon Mr. Burr to be a dangerous man, and one who ought not to be trusted with the reins of government. * * * * I could detail to you a still more despicable opinion which General Hamilton has expressed of Mr. Burr.

"Six weeks after the election, a newspaper containing the letter was placed in the hands of the vice-president, whose attention was directed to the phraseology of the two sentences.

William P. van Ness, one of his staunchest friends, received a note from