Excerpt from

Pride and Pleasure: The Schuyler Sisters in an Age of Revolution

By Amanda Vaill

Published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, October 2025 (Hardcover)

On September 17 the Hamiltons, and all New York, can read in the newspapers of momentous events that have occurred in Paris—on July 14 a mob attacked the fortress of the Bastille and cut off the hands and head of its governor, and the city is in an uproar. "Many people have been killed in the affrays and skirmishes which have happened," says *the Daily Advertiser*. "Almost all the shops are constantly shut, and a general distrust rules there. People press in crowds to get their money from the Caisse d'Escompte [the bank]." No one seems to know where the king and queen are. Fortunately for Angelica's peace of mind, Kitty is back in England with a French governess recommended by Madame de Corny, and not at Panthemont; but what has happened to Angelica's friends in Paris—not to mention John Church's many French investments?

As unsettling as this news may be, it doesn't impel Angelica to leave New York. What does is either a letter from Church saying that one or more of their children is ill, or one from her father, who seems to have heard whispers about her and Hamilton. Schuyler is concerned, possibly less for his daughter's reputation than for Hamilton's, which makes Angelica feel "a little Jealous of his attachment." Both letters demand action, for however much she follows the devices and desires of her own heart, Angelica loves her father *and* her children deeply, and she has no wish to see Hamilton suffer the fate of the Comte de Moustier, who has just been recalled to France, in part because of the rumors about himself and Madame de Bréhan. On November 2 Hamilton goes to the Falmouth packet office, where he pays for passage on the *Sandwich* for Angelica as well as Sarah and two other servants, and advances her $200 for any expenses on the trip home. On November 6 she embarks.

The parting is bitter, fraught with feelings expressed and inexpressible. Eliza, bereft at losing her sister, unsettled by the charged emotional atmosphere surrounding her departure, and fearful of the dangers of a transatlantic crossing,

can't stop crying; in the end she can't bear to see Angelica off. Hamilton leaves her with her aunt Judith Bruce, who has come from around the corner on Broad Way, and Baron Steuben and little Phil—Eliza "weeping desolately, the old Anty howling like a wolf, and Phil, that little devil, trying to outdo all the company with his cries," as Steuben describes it—and takes Angelica to the packet by himself. But in the presence of the other passengers he can't bid her more than the most formal and brotherly of farewells. Not waiting for the gangplank to be pulled up or the ship to cast off, he goes home to check on Eliza and the pangs of what he calls, in a note to Angelica, "her little affectionate heart." Finding her, and her little heart, more cheerful, he takes the baron and little Philip back with him to the Battery to watch the *Sandwich* sail toward the Narrows. *Look, Philip—can you see?* The little boy waves: *Goodbye, Auntie!* It's too much: Hamilton gives way to tears, and so does Philip, and then Steuben starts weeping too. They wait until the white sails are swallowed by the horizon, and then go home to Wall Street. There Hamilton writes to Philip Schuyler to reassure him that his daughter has sailed; "I have no doubt the arguments I have used with him will go far towards reconciling his mind to the unexpected step you took," he says later to Angelica. And Eliza, her spelling made even more haphazard by her misery, tries to compose a letter to her sister:

> My Very Dear beloved Angelica—I have seated my self to write to you, but my heart is so sadned by your Absence that it can scarsly dictate, my Eyes so filled with tears that I shall not be able to write you much but *Remember Remember*, my Dear sister of the Assurences of your returning to us, and do all you can to make your Absence short. Tell Mr. Church for me of the happiness he will give me, in bringing you to me, not to me alone but to fond parents sisters friends and to my Hamilton who has for you all the Affection of a fond own Brother. I can no more
>
> Adieu Adieu.
>
> E.H.

At the very bottom of the sheet she writes, with underscoring: "*heaven protect you.*"

* * *

As the New York shoreline recedes in the gathering dusk Angelica retires from the deck to the shelter of her cabin to write a letter. Once the *Sandwich* is safely through the Narrows the pilot will disembark and return to New York, and he will deliver her message to Wall Street. Although it's addressed to Hamilton, Eliza will certainly see it, and Angelica tries to express herself in a suitably familial way; but the raw edge of her feelings keeps cutting though her prose.

"Me voila mon tres cher," she begins, in French:

> bien en mer et le pauvre coeur bien affligé de vous avoir quitté. [Here I am, my very dear one, truly at sea and my poor heart truly afflicted at having left you.] I have almost vowed not to stay three weeks in England. My Baron desires me to write beaucoup de petits folies [many little sillinesses] but I am not much disposed for gaity [sic], and yet I endeavor already to make myself tolerable to my fellow passengers, that my sweet friends advice may not be lost on me. Do my dear Brother endeaver [sic] to sooth my poor Betsey, comfort her with the assurances that I will certainly return to take care of her soon. Remember this also yourself my dearest Brother and let neither politics or ambition drive your Angelica from your affections.
>
> The pilot leaves us this evening, he will call on you with my letter. Adieu my dear Brother, may god bless and protect you, prays your ever affectionate Angelica ever ever yours.
>
> Bitter whilst in sight of my friends, thus far my dear Brother I am content with my company, and apparently they with me, but how can I be content when I leave my best and most invaluable friends. Adieu my dear Hamilton, you said I was as dear to you as a sister keep your word, and let me have the consolation to beleive [sic] that you will never forget the promise of friendship you have vowed. A thousand embraces to my dear Betsy, she will not have so bad a night as the last, *but poor angelica* adieu mon plus cher

Poor Angelica, indeed.

For more information about the author and her works, visit https://www.amandavaill.com.