

CHAPTER VII.

HIS NOMINATION FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

ON the 12th of June, 1852, the democratic national convention assembled at Baltimore, in order to select a candidate for the presidency of the United States. Many names, eminently distinguished in peace and war, had been brought before the public, during several months previous; and among them, though by no means occupying a very prominent place, was the name of Franklin Pierce. In January of this year, the democracy of New Hampshire had signified its preference of General Pierce as a presidential candidate in the approaching canvass—a demonstration which drew from him the following response, addressed to his friend, Mr. Atherton:—

“I am far from being insensible to the generous confidence, so often manifested towards me by the people of this state; and although the object indicated in the resolution, having particular reference to myself, be not one of desire on my part, the expression is not on that account less gratifying.

“Doubtless the spontaneous and just appreciation of an intelligent people is the best earthly reward for earnest and cheerful services rendered

to one's state and country; and while it is a matter of unfeigned regret that my life has been so barren of usefulness, I shall ever hold this and similar tributes among my most cherished recollections.

“To these, my sincere and grateful acknowledgments, I desire to add, that the same motives which induced me, several years ago, to retire from public life, and which, since that time, controlled my judgment in this respect, now impel me to say, that the use of my name, in any event, before the democratic national convention at Baltimore, to which you are a delegate, would be utterly repugnant to my tastes and wishes.”

The sentiments expressed in the above letter were genuine, and from his heart. He had looked long and closely at the effects of high public station on the character and happiness, and on what is the innermost and dearest part of a man's possessions—his independence; and he had satisfied himself that office, however elevated, should be avoided for one's own sake, or accepted only as a good citizen would make any other sacrifice, at the call and at the need of his country.

As the time for the assembling of the national convention drew near, there were other sufficient indications of his sincerity in declining a stake in the great game. A circular letter was addressed, by Major Scott of Virginia, to the distinguished democrats whose claims had heretofore been publicly discussed, requesting a statement of their

