

CHAPTER X.

Meeting of the Whig National Convention—Judge Saunders' Statement—Gen. Taylor's Nomination—The Vote in the Convention—His Letter of Acceptance—His Nomination by the Charleston Meeting—His Second Allison Letter—His Election—Vote of the different States—His Departure for Washington—Order announcing his final Withdrawal from the Military Service—His Reception during his Journey—Conclusion.

It had become the settled policy of the Whig, as well as the Democratic party, since 1839, when the first Whig National Convention was held at Harrisburgh, to decide the claims of the different candidates for the Presidency by that agency. In the opinion of many of General Taylor's friends, however, it was believed that the necessity for a National Convention had been obviated by the nominations he had received from the people in primary meetings, and through county, State and Legislative conventions and caucuses. But it was contended, on the other hand, that the usual mode of selecting a candidate should be observed, even though it should be conceded that General Taylor was the choice of a large portion of the Whig party, and had virtually been nominated by the people in their primary capacity. It was claimed that the unity of the Whig party would thus be preserved, and all cause for declining to yield to him a cordial support by those who preferred another candidate, effectually removed

The Whig members of Congress, upon whom custom had imposed the duty of deciding on the propriety of designating a Presidential candidate to be supported by that party, in the usual mode, adopted this view of the question; and in pursuance with this determination they adopted a resolution during the session of 1847-8, with much unanimity, that a National Convention should be held at Philadelphia on the 7th day of June, 1848, for the purpose of nominating a candidate to be supported by the Whig party for the Presidency. To this decision the Whigs in every part of the Union yielded their ready consent. Accordingly, on the day designated, representatives of the Whig party from every State in the Union, assembled at Philadelphia, for the purpose of nominating a candidate for President.

Coming, as these Representatives did, from every part of our vast Confederacy, and representing, as they were bound to do, the varied interests, views and feelings of the whole Whig people of the nation, it was no more to be expected that there should have been entire harmony and unanimity of sentiment amongst them, upon the question for which they had assembled, than it was that there should be no difference of opinion amongst the people themselves upon the same subject. Nor is it desirable that it should be otherwise. However pure may be the character, and lofty the patriotism of any man, it is far better that his claims and qualifications for the position to which he aspires, or to which his friends would elevate him, should be closely scrutinized and rigidly canvassed. This peculiar characteristic of our social and political organization, is, perhaps, the surest guaranty of the perpetuity of our institutions. As long as the freedom with

which the characters of candidates for public favor is criticised, does not degenerate into licentiousness, its effect will be salutary to the public morals.

It cannot be regretted, therefore, that no man in this Republic should ever obtain so unlimited a hold upon the popular feeling as to place him beyond the reach of all competition, either for the Presidency or any other office under our government. That even the popularity of General Taylor, unbounded as it was, did not leave him without a rival in the Presidential contest, should be a source of congratulation, as it illustrated the independent character of the American people.

Besides General Taylor's, the names of General Scott, Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster were submitted to the Convention. Each of them had ardent, influential, and numerous friends in every part of the Union. Their claims had been warmly urged during the progress of the canvass. Their long-trying, patriotic and faithful public services, the one in a military and the others in civil capacities, had inspired public confidence, and attached to them a strong body of zealous and enthusiastic personal and political friends, who adhered to them through every change of fortune. Each of these gentlemen had a large number of delegates in the Convention, who pressed their claims with zeal and ability. On the first ballot Mr. Clay had 97 votes, General Scott 43 votes, Mr. Webster 22 votes, and 6 scattering, against 111 for General Taylor; and it was not until the fourth ballot that he received the nomination, though it was well understood from the organization of the Convention that he must ultimately be its choice. The vote on the fourth ballot was for General Taylor 171, for Mr. Clay 32, for General Scott

63, and for Mr. Webster 13; the whole number of votes cast being 279, and necessary for a choice 140. The several States on the final ballot stood as follows:

<i>Maine</i> —Taylor 5, Scott 3.	<i>Georgia</i> —Taylor 10.
<i>N. Hamp.</i> —Taylor 2, Webster, 4.	<i>Alabama</i> —Taylor 6, Clay 1
<i>Verm.</i> —Taylor 2, Clay 2, Scott 2.	<i>Mississippi</i> —Taylor 6.
<i>Massachusetts</i> —Taylor 1, Scott 2,	<i>Louisiana</i> —Taylor 6.
Webster 9.	<i>Texas</i> —Taylor 4.
<i>Rhode Island</i> —Taylor 4.	<i>Tennessee</i> —Taylor 13.
<i>Connecticut</i> —Taylor 3, Clay 3.	<i>Kentucky</i> —Taylor 11, Clay 1.
<i>New York</i> —Taylor 6, Clay 13,	<i>Missouri</i> —Taylor 7.
Scott 17.	<i>Ohio</i> —Taylor 1, Clay 1, Scott 21
<i>New Jersey</i> —Taylor 4, Clay 3.	<i>Ind.</i> —Taylor 7, Clay 1, Scott 4
<i>Pennsylvania</i> —Taylor 12, Clay 4,	<i>Illinois</i> —Taylor 8.
Scott 10.	<i>Michigan</i> —Taylor 2, Scott 3.
<i>Delaware</i> —Taylor 2, Scott 1.	<i>Florida</i> —Taylor 3.
<i>Maryland</i> —Taylor 8.	<i>Arkansas</i> —Taylor 3.
<i>Virginia</i> —Taylor 16, Clay 1.	<i>Wisconsin</i> —Taylor 4.
<i>N. Carolina</i> —Taylor 10, Clay 1.	<i>Iowa</i> —Taylor 4.
<i>S. Carolina</i> —Taylor 1, Clay 1.	

General Taylor's nomination had been opposed by a respectable minority of the Convention, under the apprehension or misapprehension that he had avowed his determination to remain a candidate for the Presidency, without regard to the action of a Whig National Convention. This consideration influenced the conduct of a considerable number of the delegates in the Convention, with whom otherwise he would have been the first choice, besides rendering more determined the opposition of those whose preferences were in favor of other gentlemen. This error in regard to Gen. Taylor's intentions was used against him with much force; and notwithstanding the proof that he should cheerfully acquiesce in the decision of the Convention, was in the hands of one of its members, it was not publicly used to disabuse the minds of the delegates

until after the third ballot. Then, however, Judge Saunders, one of the delegates from Louisiana, who had in his possession the evidence referred to, submitted to the Convention, on behalf of the delegation from that State, the following satisfactory and authentic statement:

"The position occupied by General Taylor in relation to the Presidency, does not seem to be correctly understood by many persons, and for that reason it is deemed proper, by the delegation of Louisiana, to make such explanation and statements in relation to that statesman as may effectually remove all doubt, in the efforts at misrepresentation and misapprehension on that point. General Taylor has taken no part in bringing his name before the American people, in connection with the Presidency, nor does he present his name to this Convention as a candidate. His friends throughout the country, rather discouraged than encouraged by him, have placed him prominently before the nation, for the place once occupied by the illustrious father of his country; and Gen. Taylor consents to the nomination. He considers himself in the hands of his friends, who have honored him with their choice. He has publicly and repeatedly stated that they might withdraw him whenever they thought that the interests of the country required it. He does not consider that, under the circumstances in which his name had been brought forward, it would be proper in him to withdraw himself. Such has been his position since he assented to the use of his name subsequent to the capture of Monterey, and such is his position now. On the part of the delegation from Louisiana, I will further state, that General Taylor desires it to be understood, that in his opinion, his friends who came into

the Convention are bound to abide by its decision, and to sustain the nominee, heart and soul; that General Taylor recognizes, in his friends in this Convention, the right to withdraw his name, and he will cheerfully acquiesce in such withdrawal.

"General Taylor, we are also authorized to say, will hail with entire satisfaction any nomination besides himself, being persuaded that the welfare of our country requires a change of men and measures, in order to arrest the downward tendency of our national affairs. On making this announcement, the delegates of Louisiana wish it to be distinctly understood that it involves no inconsistency on the part of General Taylor, in case the choice of this Convention should fall on another. If General Taylor's friends in this Convention withdraw him, it will be their act, and not his; and by the act of uniting with this Convention, his friends withdraw his name from the canvass, unless he be the nominee of this Convention; and we deem it proper to assure the Whigs of the Union, that we desire the nomination and election of General Taylor to the Presidency, on no other than national grounds."

This statement mainly removed the doubts that had, up to that time, existed, in some quarters, as to the policy of nominating General Taylor, and relieved those who had honestly opposed him, under the conviction that whatever might be the conclusion of the members of the Convention, he would still continue a candidate, from much of the embarrassment in which they were placed. And as it was fully and unequivocally sanctioned and approved by General Taylor himself shortly after, all candid members of the Whig party, in every section of the Union, ceased any longer to urge this objection against him.