

H. OF R.]

*Naturalization Bill.*

[DECEMBER, 1791.]

We had (he said) on this subject not only example, but warning. Will gentlemen (said Mr. S.) recollect the rage of ages which existed in the country from which we came, between the Saxon, Danish, and Norman emigrants and the natives of the country? The cruelties, the oppressions, the assassinations, in a word, the miseries to which this gave birth? Perhaps it might be said that in this instance the emigrants were hostile invaders; but the same events took place in the decline of the Roman empire, between the emigrants who were invited to occupy the vacant frontiers and the ancient inhabitants; although the former ought to have been united to the latter by every principle of affection and gratitude. By these and almost an infinity of other instances, it would not be rash to conclude, that by the undeviating principles of human nature, whenever the inhabitants of one country should be permitted to settle in another, by national affections, an union would be formed, unfriendly not only to the ancient inhabitants, but also to social order. Our own experience was not, he believed, in opposition to the general observation. Although this reasoning was to his mind conclusive against a general and indiscriminate admission of aliens to the rights of citizenship, yet he did not wish it should go to a complete exclusion.

It was said, in support of what was termed our liberal policy, that our country wanted commercial capital; that we had an immense tract of vacant territory; and that we ought not, with the avarice of a miser, to engross to ourselves the exclusive enjoyment of our political treasures.

Mr. SEDGWICK said he had never been convinced, that we ought to make so great a sacrifice of principle for the rapid accumulation of commercial capital. He had never been convinced that by an improvement of our own resources, it would not accumulate as fast as might be for the public benefit. We heard much of equality. Property was in some sense power; and the possession of immense property generated daring passions which scorned equality, and with impatience endured the restraints of equal laws. Property was undoubtedly to be protected, as the only sure encouragement of industry, without which we should degenerate into savages. But he had never been convinced that the anxiety with which we wished an accumulation of capital in the hands of individuals, was founded on correct Republican reflection. The ardent ambition inspired by the possession of great wealth, and the power of gratifying it, which it conferred, had in many instances disturbed the public peace, and in not a few destroyed liberty.

The vacant lands which some with so much avidity wished to see in the occupation of foreigners, he considered as the best capital stock of the future enjoyment of Americans; as an antidote against the poison of luxury; as the nursery of robust and manly virtue, and as a preventive of a numerous class of citizens becoming indigent and therefore dependent. Whenever the time should arrive, (and may that period be very distant,) when there should no longer be presented to

the poor a decent competence and independence, as the effect of industry and economy, (which would generally by the case when lands were no longer to be obtained, on their present easy and reasonable terms,) then that description of men, now perhaps the most happy and virtuous, would become miserable to themselves and a burden to the community. Now the man who entered on the stage of life, without property, had a reasonable assurance, that a few years of industry and economy, would give him independence, competence, and respectability. The prospect gave relish and effect to his labors. He planted himself on the frontiers, and cultivated in his posterity every useful and manly virtue. This was his treasure, and it was a glorious one.

Mr. S. said he considered America as in possession of a greater stock of enjoyment than any other people on earth. That it was our duty to husband it with care; yet he could not altogether exclude such virtuous individuals, as might fly here, as to an asylum against oppression. On the one hand, he would not dissipate our treasures with the thoughtless profusion of a prodigal; nor would he, on the other, hoard them, as in the unfeeling grasp of a miser. Our glorious fabric (said he) has been cemented by the richest blood of our country, and may it long continue to shelter us against the blasts of poverty, of anarchy, and of tyranny.

The present (Mr. S. said) he believed the most inauspicious time for the indiscriminate admission of aliens to the rights of citizenship. A war, the most cruel and dreadful which had been known for centuries, was now raging in all those countries from which emigrants were to be expected. The most fierce and unrelenting passions were engaged in a conflict, which shook to their foundations all the ancient political structures in Europe. This contest was supported on the one hand by men who believed personal political distinctions were necessary to the great purpose of security, and on the other by those who thought that society could be protected and individuals secured by a Government with departments, and without checks; neither embracing the principles established here, where, without privileged orders distinct portions of power were to be deposited in different hands, in such manner that it was almost impossible for the mind even to conceive that the different departments should form an union for any mischievous purpose; and altogether impossible to believe that without such concurrence either alone should be capable of executing any wicked design.

Could (he asked) any reasonable man believe, that men who, actuated by such passions, had fought on grounds so opposite, almost equally distant from the happy mean we had chosen, would here mingle in social affections with each other, or with us? That their passions and prejudices would subside as soon as they should set foot in America? or, that, possessing those passions and prejudices, they were qualified to make or to be made the governors of Americans?