

H. of R.]

*Census of the Union.*

[FEBRUARY 2, 1790.]

States, in the State of North-Carolina, returned with amendments, in which the Senate requested the concurrence of the House; these amendments were agreed to, except one amendment only.

By the amendments of the Senate to the foregoing act a clause is introduced for the purpose of further suspending the operation of the tonnage act, respecting the vessels belonging to Rhode Island, till the first day of April next.

TUESDAY, February 2.

THEODORE BLAND, from Virginia, appeared and took his seat.

The engrossed bill for securing the copy-right of books to authors and proprietors was read the third time; but, on motion, was recommitted to Mess. BOUDINOT, SHERMAN, and SYLVESTER.

CENSUS OF THE UNION.

Mr. FOSTER, from the Committee to whom was recommitted the bill providing for the enumeration of the inhabitants of the United States, reported the bill with amendments; and the House proceeded to the consideration thereof.

Mr. LIVERMORE apprehended this plan was too extensive to be carried into operation, and divided the people into classes too minute to be readily ascertained. For example, many inhabitants of New Hampshire pursued two, three, or four occupations, but which was the principal one depended upon the season of the year, or some other adventitious circumstance; some followed weaving in the spring and summer, but the making of shoes was the most predominant in the fall and winter; under what class are these people to be thrown, especially if they joined husbandry and carpenter's work to the rest? He was confident the distinction which the gentleman wished to make could not be performed; he was therefore against adding additional labor, and consequently, incurring additional expense, whether the work was executed or not. Besides this, he apprehended it would excite the jealousy of the people; they would suspect that Government was so particular, in order to learn their ability to bear the burthen of direct or other taxes, and under this idea, they may refuse to give the officer such a particular account as the law requires, by which means you expose him to great inconvenience and delay in the performance of his duty.

Mr. SEDGWICK understood, when the bill was recommitted, it was intended to specify every class of citizens, into which the community was divided, in order to ascertain the actual state of the society. Now, he had to ask, why it was not extended further? He thought the learned professions should be returned, as well as the others, and would furnish as grateful information as the return of any other. The state of society could be ascertained, perhaps, in some degree, from observing these proportions.

Mr. MADISON.—If the object to be attained by this particular enumeration be as important in the judgment of this House, as it appears to

my mind, they will not suffer a small defect in the plan to defeat the whole. And I am very sensible, Mr. Speaker, that there will be more difficulty attendant on the taking the census, in the way required by the constitution, and which we are obliged to perform, than there will be in the additional trouble of making all the distinctions contemplated in the bill. The classes of people most troublesome to enumerate, in this schedule, are happily those resident in large towns, as the greatest number of artisans live in populous cities and compact settlements, where distinctions are made with great ease.

I take it, sir, that in order to accommodate our laws to the real situation of our constituents, we ought to be acquainted with that situation. It may be impossible to ascertain it as far as I wish; but we may ascertain it so far as to be extremely useful, when we come to pass laws, affecting any particular description of people. If gentlemen have any doubts with respect to its utility, I cannot satisfy them in a better manner, than by referring them to the debates which took place upon the bills intended collaterally to benefit the agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing parts of the community. Did they not wish then to know the relative proportion of each, and the exact number of every division, in order that they might rest their arguments on facts, instead of assertions and conjectures? Will any gentleman pretend to doubt but our regulations would have been better accommodated to the real state of the society than they are? If our decisions had been influenced by actual returns would they not have been varied, according as the one side or the other was more or less numerous? We should have given less encouragement in some instances, and more in others; but in every instance, we should have proceeded with more light and satisfaction.

The gentleman from Massachusetts, (Mr. SEDGWICK) has asked, why the learned professions were not included: I have no objection to giving a column to the general body. I think the work would be rendered more complete by the addition, and if the decision of such a motion turned upon my voice, they shall be added. But it may nevertheless be observed, that in such a character they can never be objects of legislative attention or cognizance. As to those who are employed in teaching and inculcating the duties of religion there may be some indelicacy in singling them out, as the General Government is proscribed from interfering, in any manner whatever, in matters respecting religion; and it may be thought to do this, in ascertaining who, and who are not ministers of the Gospel. Conceiving the extension of the plan to be useful, and not difficult, I hope it may meet the ready concurrence of this House.

Mr. PAGE thought this particular method of describing the people, would occasion an alarm among them; they would suppose the Government intended something, by putting the Union to this additional expense, beside gratifying an idle curiosity; their purposes cannot be sup-