

failure of issue) to dispose of their lands by testament, and devise away estates from the collateral heir, this soon produced an access of wealth in some, & poverty in others: which, by a natural progression, first produced popular tumults and dissensions; and these at length ended in tyranny, and the utter extinction of liberty: which was quickly followed by a total subversion of their state and nation. On the other hand, it would now seem hard, on account of some abuses, (which are the natural consequence of free agency, when coupled with human infirmity,) to debar the owner of lands from distributing them after his death as the exigence of his family affairs, or the justice due to his creditors may require. And this power if prudently managed, has with us a peculiar propriety; by preventing the very evil which resulted from Solon's institution, the too great accumulation of property: which is the natural consequence of our doctrine of succession by primogeniture, to which the Athenians were strangers. Of this accumulation the ill effects were severely felt even in the feudal times; but it should always be strongly discouraged in a commercial country, whose welfare depends on the number of moderate fortunes engaged in the extension of trade.

There is another consideration of a political nature in favour of this bill, which I believe has never been mentioned. The Elective franchise, except in towns, is confined to freeholders. If the landed property of the country should be accumulated in the hands of a few, the elections of members of this house would be less popular, and the great body of the people would have no voice in the laws by which they would be governed. This house would cease to be the democratic branch of the Legislature, and would be converted into a mere committee of aristocrats. It might then degenerate into a sycophantic office for registering the decrees of the Executive; in which case nothing could save it from contempt, but a solemn declaration of its own immaculate purity, which, of course, would