

INTRODUCTION.

escaped without receiving its due portion of attention: and this appears the less likely, when it is considered that such causes belong to the jurisdiction of a particular court, that they are instituted by a board of revenue, and are advised and conducted by the law officers of the crown. The circumstances attending these suits give them a very special appearance. There are officers of an established board, promoting and watching the progress of them in every stage, whose situation makes it their interest to pick up every suggestion that can be added to the stock of official information; and it is not very likely, that any decision, worth remembering, should have escaped both the general reporters, and those who collect for the use of the custom-house: if the latter will not supply the deficiency of the former, we may rest satisfied that it can be supplied from no other source.

It is in the memory of many persons, who are officially bound to know it, that for twenty or thirty years back, very few points of law have been argued in the court of exchequer upon any of the Acts of Navigation (a). From the experience of this period we are enabled to form some judgment of the preceding; and we may readily believe, that in former times, as we know it is in our own, the generality of suits grounded upon these statutes, turned upon some point of fact, without any dispute about the meaning of the law;

(a) See the preceding Note.