

retaining only the small Islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and the right of fishing from Cape Bonavista on the Northern to Point Riche on the Western Coast. England now obtained the dominion of the entire Island, but had no intention of colonizing it. She wished to retain it as the French do the North and West shores at present, as a nursery for seamen, and to make the riches of the deep in Newfoundland contribute to the strength and to the wealth of England. Freedom of Catholic worship was by treaty allowed to the French residents, but with the sinister proviso, "as far as the laws of England permit." Governor Edwards, taking advantage of this, gave such annoyance to the French Catholics and their Clergy that almost all of them sold their properties and left the island; thus a body of useful citizens were lost to the colony through these bigotted proceedings; but we must in justice make allowance for the prejudices of the age. In the reign of King William III., by an extraordinary statute, a form of misrule was established tending to discourage settlement and create interminable confusion—the three first fishing captains arriving in the Island each summer, took the names of Admiral, Vice-Admiral and Rear-Admiral, and without any qualification except the priority of arrival, became magistrates, empowered to decide all fishery rights and civil causes. We may imagine what sort of laws these men would deal out to their servants, and to the poor inhabitants whom they in general looked on as intruders. Something like a regular census of the population was taken in 1763, just 97 years ago; the inhabitants returned then were 13112—4795 Catholics and 8317 Protestants. The fixed inhabitants however were estimated at only 7500, the rest being summer residents, but returned home every winter. The state of the population was miserable in the extreme; no law, no security, the uncontrolled will of the ignorant fishing Admirals being the only rule. Accordingly Lord Verd Beaulclerc who commanded the Naval force here, by his representations obtained from the Home Government the appointment of a titular Governor, and in 1729 Captain Osborn was nominated as the first Governor. The fishing admirals however would not easily yield up the power they possessed and misused, and though the appointment of a local governor, even for the summer months, was a recognition of the people of the island, still he found himself almost powerless. The only law known in the colony for a long series of years after was the proclamation of the Governors, and without their sanction, until within the recollection of many now living in St. John's, a house could not be