

INTRODUCTION.

been able to discover. The place where a lawyer would naturally look for materials of this sort, is the books of reports, containing decisions and opinions of the courts. This search has been made, but it has not answered the expectations that might be entertained either from the importance of the subject or the lapse of time, which promised many occasions for judicial discussion on these laws. All the cases to be found in the printed books, from the time of passing the Act of Navigation to the present moment, do not exceed ten (a); nor has repeated inquiry been able to draw forth any information of this kind from manuscripts. One great source therefore of illustration, and that which principally commands the attention of the professors of the law, is extremely deficient in this branch of jurisprudence.

THIS dearth of recorded judgments must surely be ascribed to no other cause than that there were very few worth recording: for it is not to be believed that, among the variety of matter collected from term to term in Westminster-hall, *that* furnished by the laws of navigation should have es-

(a) That is, in June 1792, when this book was first published; a greater number are to be found in the books, during the short period which has since elapsed. These, however, are not in Exchequer causes, instituted by the Crown, for enforcing the regulations of the Navigation System; but in causes between party and party for adjusting private rights; many of these questions have been on the Register Act, Stat. 26. Geo. 3. upon the transfer of property in ships; some have arisen incidentally in Insurance causes, where objections have been raised on the illegality of the voyage insured.

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