

which have been collected with greater Exactness, and are stated with more Accuracy and Precision than will, we conceive, be found in former Returns.

It would be equally unnecessary to enter at present into a minute Detail of the Newfoundland Fishery in the early Times of its Establishment, and in its progressive State, as Your Majesty will find every Circumstance relative thereto already fully set forth and enlarged upon by our Predecessors in Office, in a Representation made to his Majesty King George the First, in the Year 1718, in which Representation many Facts are stated, and Arguments deduced therefrom, and several Propositions submitted, which we apprehend will be very worthy of Attention, whenever it shall be found necessary to go into a Consideration of those Measures which it may be ultimately proper to pursue, in respect to this Fishery in every Part of it.

It may, however, be necessary briefly to premise, that for more than a Century after the First Discovery of Newfoundland, and the Establishment of its Fisheries, the Opinions of Government, as to the most advantageous Plan of carrying it on for the National Benefit, appear to have been very unsettled, wavering between Two different and in some Measure adverse Propositions, viz. either the planting the Island and establishing a Civil Government, and thereby encouraging a promiscuous Fishery, or the discouraging Inhabitation, and thereby confining the Fishery entirely to Ships fitted out from these Kingdoms; and thus by sometimes adopting and pursuing the One, and sometimes the other, as different Interests prevailed, the Nation lost many Advantages, which would have been derived to it, had either one or the other of the Propositions been firmly and uniformly pursued.

The Attention which was given after the happy Revolution to those Measures, which might most effectually promote and extend the Commerce of Great Britain, necessarily introduced an Examination into the State of this important Branch of that Commerce; and, after a full Discussion of the Two different Propositions which had been before alternately pursued, in respect to the Mode of carrying on the Fishery, the latter was, though not without great Difference of Opinion, adopted; and those Regulations for the Management of it, which had been in former Reigns prescribed by Charters from the Crown, were with some small Alterations enacted into Law, by the Statute of the 10th and 11th of William the Third.

As that Act was however soon followed by a War between England and France, it was difficult to judge with Precision of the Effect of it, under such a Circumstance of accidental Discouragement to the Trade. But it is evident from the Returns of the Number of Ships employed in the Fishery from Great Britain, not only during the War, but for several Years after the Peace of Utrecht, that the Act had not the Effect to restore the Ship Fishery, which we conceive to have been the principal Object of it; this is nevertheless not to be wondered at, seeing, that however perfect and complete the Regulations of the Act may be as to many Points, yet the Observance of them is not enforced by any Penalty or Mode of Prosecution; nor, if it were, do any of them directly operate to the restraining that Inhabitation,