

From hence therefore it plainly appears, that the Navigation of this Kingdom has suffered exceedingly ever since the Transportation of Passengers to Newfoundland has been connived at; and there can be no Doubt but that it has been One of the principal Causes of the Want of Seamen for Your Majesty's Service.

The next irregular and pernicious Practice of the Inhabitants that must be taken Notice of, is, their retailing of Rum and other Strong Liquors among the Fishermen.

That the Fishery was severely affected by the unhappy Consequences of this Practice soon after the First Planters were settled in Newfoundland, is apparent from the Charter of King Charles the First: whereby it is ordained in the 10th Article,

“ That no Person shall set up any Tavern for selling of Wine, Beer, &c.
“ to entertain the Fishermen, &c.”

And it is as certain that the flourishing State of the Fishing Trade during the aforesaid Reign was, in a great Measure, owing to this wholesome Prohibition; for as long as it was maintained, so long the Trade prospered, and it was no sooner dispensed with but the Trade sensibly declined; and although the Planters were afterwards kept in Awe for some Time by the Charters that were granted by King Charles the Second, which confirmed the said Prohibition; nevertheless, when that Difficulty was surmounted, and they were at Liberty to pursue their own Measures, the Fishery immediately languished. Nor has it rendered to this Kingdom from that Time above One Third Part of the Profit that was formerly enjoyed thereby; excepting only after the Conclusion of the Peace at Ryswick, when for Three Years the Fishing Trade was vigorously carried on, in Hopes that the said Peace would have favoured the Consumption of their Fish in Foreign Parts, and that the settling of the Trade by an Act of Parliament would have effectually prevented all Abuses and Disorders, and restored good Order and Government in the Fishery. But the said Act having only restrained the Inhabitants who keep Public Houses from selling upon the Lord's Day, or Sunday, any Liquors whatsoever, and without imposing any Penalty upon the Transgressors, even upon that Day, Newfoundland is now become a perfect Scene of Drunkenness and Debauchery; nor can it be otherwise whilst such vast Quantities of Rum and Strong Liquors, Tobacco, and other Stores, are Annually imported from New England, the Leeward Islands, and other Places; and that the Inhabitants, who carry on their Fishing Trade at a much greater Charge than the Fishing Ships, and are under the Necessity of selling their Fish at the same Price, have no other Way to reduce the Price thereof but by what they gain upon the Sale of their said Liquors to the poor Fishermen, who being always too prone to drink, are easily drawn into Debaucheries and Excesses, until they have profusely expended and consumed all, or at least a large Part of their Wages, to the great Prejudice of their Families. And as this has been always justly resented as an intolerable Abuse and Burthen, so the Disorders that naturally arise from the said Debaucheries have obstructed the Trade, by discouraging the Masters and Owners of the Fishing Ships from engaging in these Voyages; it being evident that the Fishermen are become negligent and careless in their Employment; that they are hereby rendered unfit for their Labour; that