

CHAPTER II.

The earlier attitude of English statesmen was on the whole adverse to permanent colonization.

(I.) Now, though there is so strong a case to prove that British supremacy was enforced from its discovery, we can hardly speak so confidently of the English intention to settle and colonize Newfoundland. Indeed the data collected seem to prove that, with the exception of some few and widely separated permissions—issued chiefly to individuals—the policy of the home-country tended rather to keep the Island uninhabited. In this policy the statesmen of the time may have been influenced by a belief that the severity of the climate and barrenness of the soil rendered the country unfit for occupation—this is hinted at in the reports of at least one official—but on the whole, other considerations had more weight. These resulted from the repeated attempts made by the West Country merchants to preserve Newfoundland for a fishing station and exclusively for their own benefit.

It was shrewdly foreseen by these traders that any settlement of a permanent nature must in the long