

issue of this magazine. It practically excluded the inhabitants from the fairest half of the island and that which was most favourable for agricultural operations, and drove them to that fatal reliance on the precarious returns of the fisheries as the *sole* source of their subsistence, which has kept the great mass of the people in an impoverished condition to the present hour. It was another, and perhaps the worst, of the many wrongs heaped on this hardly-used colony.

FISHING ADMIRALS.

Some idea of the difficulties the stationary portion of the population had to contend with in those days, may be gathered from the system of rule, or rather misrule, under which they found themselves placed. In the reign of Charles 1st, the Star Chamber enacted that if a person in Newfoundland killed another, or stole to the value of forty shillings, the offender was to be sent to England and placed under the power of the Earl Marshall, who could order execution upon the testimony of two witnesses. Another notable enactment of this arbitrary tribunal was that the master of the first ship entering a harbour was to be admiral therein, for the fishing season, and be empowered to decide all complaints. In vain did the inhabitants, groaning under the rule of these chance appointed, ignorant skippers, who decided all questions without any responsibility, and often for their own private benefit, petition the home-government for the appointment of a Governor and Civil Magistrates. The shipowners and merchants had sufficient influence to prevent a measure which would have been a recognition of the island as a colony and a direct encouragement to settlers. Blinded by self-interest and a mistaken, short-sighted policy, these men strenuously endeavoured for years to keep the country an unreclaimed wilderness; while the delusion, for such in the end it was discovered to be, of training seamen for the navy, by means of the Newfoundland fisheries, induced the rulers of Britain to repress colonization by legal enactments, and to attempt to drive out such as had obtained a footing in the country, by harsh and oppressive laws. Even in the reign of William 3rd, when more enlightened constitutional principles were guiding the rulers of the nation, a code of laws for the government of Newfoundland was enacted, in which some of the worst abuses of the past were perpetuated, and misrule and confusion intensified. By this extraordinary statute, the fishing admirals of Star Chamber origin were re-instated with unlimited powers; and not only was it enacted that the master of the first ship arriving from England, each fishing season, should be Admiral of the harbour where he cast anchor, but the masters of the second and third ships so arriving were to be Vice-Admiral and Rear-Admiral, the first having the privilege of reserving to himself so much of the beach as he required for his own use in the voyage. This rough mode of administering justice was the only one in those days; and was founded on the principle of ignoring the existence of a resident population, and providing merely for the fishermen who annually migrated from England. We can readily imagine what kind of justice was dealt out by these rough, ignorant sea-captains, who regarded the inhabitants as interlopers, whose