

the Timber Trade should claim his first attention. Foreign timber began to be imported into England, to a considerable extent, about the beginning of the seventeenth century. Norway furnished, almost exclusively, the necessary supplies for a long series of years; at length it was discovered, that the Russian and Prussian ports in the Baltic could ship timber of a larger scantling, and therefore adapted for particular purposes, and a considerable portion of the trade naturally took that direction. The duties during all this time were imposed without any intention of forcing the British consumer to purchase in any markets, which he would not have naturally chosen. During the last century, indeed, it must be observed, that encouragement in the shape of a large bounty was first granted to the importers of wood from our American settlements: it produced the effect of forcing a few cargoes into the market, from New England; but the breaking out of the American war shortly afterwards put an end to the traffic. During the administration of Mr. Pitt, the duty on timber and deals was several times augmented, for the purposes of revenue; the object of taxation was well chosen, as no augmentation had taken place previously since the reign of George the First; but still no intention was expressed by the government of interfering with the natural channels of this traffic until the year 1809. At that time, in consequence of the war with the Northern Powers, the price of timber had reached a most enormous height, and ministers turned their attention to Canada, as the country from whence