

bring them back when the Fishing Season was over, the Practice of their remaining there began, and has continued and gradually increased to the Extent at which it is at present arrived.

It is difficult to ascertain with Precision the present Number of Inhabitants having constant Residence in Newfoundland; but from the best Accounts we have been able to collect, it cannot be less than Fifteen Thousand, including Men, Women, and Children; and from the Report made to us by Your Majesty's Governor, of the State of the Island, and of the Condition and Employment of these People, it appears,

“ That the greatest Part of them are Roman Catholicks:

“ That they are under no Controul of any regular Civil Government, except what arises from the ineffectual Establishment of Justices of the Peace, who oftener use their Authority for their own private Interest than the Public Welfare:

“ That except at St. John's, they have not any where the necessary Offices of Religion administered to them, but live in the most savage State, abandoning themselves to every Species of Debauchery and Extravagance, which such a Condition must necessarily introduce:

“ That for Seven Months in the Year there is not Employment for a Tenth Part of these Inhabitants; and that consequently they spend that Time in Idleness, and subsist for the greatest Part by Robbery, Theft, and every Species of Violence and Wickedness:

“ That they burn and destroy great Quantities of Wood growing near the several Harbours, which ought to be preserved for building and repairing Boats, Store Houses, Stages, Cook Rooms, and other Structures essentially necessary to the Fishery:

“ That they are principally, if not altogether, supplied with Provisions (Beef, Pork, and Butter excepted, which are supplied from Ireland) and also with Rum, Sugar, Melasses, and many other Articles of necessary Consumption, from the other Plantations, to the Amount of more than double in Value what they take from this Kingdom:

“ That these, as well as all other Articles of Importation, are engrossed by a few opulent Merchants, Store-Keepers, and considerable Boat Keepers, who retail them to the rest of the Inhabitants, and to those they employ under them in the Fishery, at exorbitant Prices; by which Means they keep them poor and in Debt, and dependent upon them; and that these Merchants, Store Keepers, and Boat Keepers, in order to secure the Produce of the Labour of the poor Inhabitants to themselves, press their Goods upon them in Advance for that Produce, so that they contract Debts without a Possibility of paying them, and thus mortgaging the Fish before it is caught, their only Study is, how to defraud their Creditors, contract fresh Debts with other Merchants, and so become indifferent about prosecuting their Fishery; and if they do prosecute it, it is only to sell their Fish clandestinely to others for immediate Supplies, or to the French:

“ That the Inhabitants, under these Circumstances of Oppression, and deprived of every View of bettering their Condition, become abandoned