

*George Garland,
Esq.*

to nothing, and then the same result to the revenue will ensue; but with the additional misfortune to the country, of losing this trade so important to its best interests.

One serious evil attending the trade, which I ought to have stated sooner, results from the existing law of Newfoundland, respecting servants wages; the planters whose situation I have described, are for the most part very poor men, they take as I have before explained, every article required for their support, and for the prosecution of the fishery from the merchants on credit, and usually engage one or two other poor men, as servants for the season, at stated wages. At the close of the season, if a sufficiency of fish and oil has been caught to discharge the debt due to the merchant, and to pay the servants their wages, all is well; but if there be a deficiency, the servants receive the whole of the wages for which they contracted, and the merchant has only the remainder of the fish and oil, which very often is not half equal to the amount of his debt. Now, surely, every principle of equity requires, that the merchant who has furnished food for both the planter and his servants, all through the season, as also tackle for the fishery, should, in case of insolvency, share equally at least with the servant who has only supplied his labour, and has already received some recompence for that in his personal support with the planter through the season. It is obvious, that this enactment was founded on a supposition, that English merchants, and not Newfoundland planters were the servants employers, as indeed was the case in the early periods of the fishery; under such circumstances, it was clearly right that the servants should have a claim for the amount of their wages upon the fish and oil, the produce of their labour prior to the claim of any common creditor of the estate, whose demand might have arisen from transactions unconnected with the fishery; but when a planter is the employer, the merchant furnishing necessary supplies for the current season, and the servant contributing his labour, the case is essentially altered, and both should share in an equal ratio; besides the injustice of the law as it now stands, it takes away that stimulus to exertion on the part of the servant which would exist, if he knew that he could only share equally with the merchant in the produce of the voyage. We trust, that this evil will be remedied by an immediate alteration of the law. I beg the Committee to bear in their mind, that were Great Britain destitute of such a trade, affording a nursery for seamen, a vent for manufactures, the means of producing so great a balance in favour of its possessor, in the trade of that country with foreign nations, it would naturally become the study of the British legislature to adopt the measures I have proposed relative to exemptions from duty, &c. in order to create such a trade; and of course it will be more easy to preserve than it would be to create it.

The removal of the superfluous population of Newfoundland, is a question distinct from the representations I have already made. For information on the heart-rending condition of these poor creatures during the last winter, and up to the date of the last letters, I beg to lay before the Committee, various extracts of letters received from the principals or agents of some of the first rate houses.

The Committee will learn from them, that a lawless, because starving population, has been seen in various parts, breaking open the merchants stores, and carrying off their property, or seizing the vessels that arrived with provisions; and in both cases, setting the police (such as it is) altogether at defiance. In one instance, going with arms in their hands, demanding and enforcing a supply of provisions from the sitting magistrates.

[The witness delivered in the same; and they were read as follows:]

Extract of a Letter from Edward Kemp, agent to George and James Kemp; dated Brigus, 29th November 1816.

“ For some time past my attention has been much drawn towards the displeasing prospect before us for the ensuing winter, which seems indeed already to have set in; owing to the numerous failures and the general reduction of establishments, affairs assume in my apprehension a very serious aspect. A large portion of people are not only deprived of credit for general supplies, but are without the means of getting the mere necessities of life; a scarcity of provisions is anticipated bye and bye, and must inevitably happen, from the limited supplies come to the country; add to this, the population is extremely great of Irish servants out of employ; the governor has chartered two vessels for the conveyance of superfluous population, and does not seem disposed to do more; but this is a very feeble aid when the people is so large, and they