

pardoned in introducing a few hints relative to the importance of these examinations, and the benefits flowing from the mineral kingdom,—the greatest source of national wealth.

When the condition of Great Britain is compared with that of other nations, less favoured with coal and the metals, it will be perceived how much mankind have been improved in their moral and secular state by the use of substances found only in the earth. And, when the present happiness of civilized countries is contrasted with the condition of those barbarous nations, whose axe and arrow are made of stone, some idea even at a single glance may be formed of the power and wealth which have been drawn from the bosom of this planet. Should an enquiry be made into the cause of the exalted state of the mother country, and the sources from which her commerce has been derived, and is now supported, it will be found that the vast and various productions of her mines are the chief support of her manufacturing industry, and the great centre of supply for almost every nation upon the earth.

The uses of Iron are so well known they scarcely require any mention. This metal enters into all the multifarious operations of civilized life, and the purposes to which it is applied in every kind of labour are almost too numerous to be comprehended. It forms the plough of the farmer, the hook of the fisherman, the safeguard of the mariner, and all those terrific engines of war used for assault and defence. Its use distinguishes a civilized people from those who are but little elevated above the brute creation, except in their human form.

Next in importance to iron, is Coal. When Coal is viewed in all its relations to mankind, the mind is filled with astonishment at its effects. To Coal, the generator of steam, the multiplied operations in manufactories, the great improvements in all kinds of machinery, the vast saving of animal strength, the diminution of human pain and labour, and the majestic strides of civilization, owe their origin.

Coal possesses the power of transmuting ships and land carriages into animals, capable of performing the greatest feats of strength without relaxation or repose. Through its influence directed to the production of steam, vessels now ply between Great Britain and America in a shorter space of time than had been ever before anticipated, and the inhabitants of countries far remote from each other are now brought into frequent and neighbourly intercourse. Were the bituminous treasures of England exhausted, her manufactories would fail, her trade cease to exist, and the nation would gradually retrograde into a state of ancient barbarity.