



COAL-HEAVERS.

AMONG the many laborious avocations essential to the support of society in a high state of civilization, perhaps none can be found that demands greater bodily exertion, than the various departments of the coal trade ; and the distinctions existing between one rational human being, and another, inhabitants of the same country, and subject to, and protected by the same laws, cannot appear more remote, than by comparing the employment and habits of the collier in the coal-mine, with those of the enlightened consumer of the mineral furnished by his labour. We may consider coal as one of the most valuable productions of this island ; for to it we owe the superiority of many of our manufactures, particularly in iron and steel. Hence we discover, that what nature has bountifully bestowed upon one country, is rendered valuable only by the productions of another. The iron of Sweden is principally manufactured in the forges of Britain, and afterwards sent to all parts of the globe. Indeed British coal is esteemed to be so superior to that of other countries for the manufacture of this metal, that many thousand tons are annually exported to different parts of Europe for that purpose.

The sinking of a coal mine may be adduced as an instance of what the daring genius of man will attempt ; and the formation of some of the coal works, prove what human abilities can accomplish. Every mechanical power is applied ; and stupendous machines and engines are constructed, by the operation of which, a small proportion of coal is made the active cause of raising thousands of tons of the same ; and water acquires the power of preventing the works from being destroyed by its own element.

It is doubted whether coals were used as fuel by the early inhabitants of this country. Ornaments and trinkets were made by the ancient Britons, and by the Romans, of a certain species of this mineral. It is conjectured from the discovery of Roman Antiquities, that pit coal was burnt for some purposes by this people when in England. The discovery of Newcastle coals is stated to have occurred in 1234, and Henry the Third granted a charter to that town for the digging of them. In the year 1306 they were used in such quantities, that a prohibition to burning them in London was issued, occasioned by a complaint made by the nobility and gentry to the King ; alleging that the air was infected by a noisome smell,

and a thick cloud, from the coals used in the suburbs by brewers, dyers, &c. requiring great fires, to the endangering the health of the inhabitants. Upon which his Majesty issued a proclamation prohibiting coals being burnt in London, and the suburbs, under severe penalties. They were, however, in general use in London in the year 1400; since which time the encouragement to the collieries has encreased in proportion to the destruction of the woods. Many thousands of a hardy race of people are employed in this trade; and our navy is furnished with a great number of its most valuable sailors from the crews who navigate their ships: indeed these vessels, termed colliers, are esteemed the nurseries for British sailors.

The figures represented upon this Plate are denominated Coal-Heavers, and are employed to measure the coals, which are sent to the consumers.

THE
COSTUME
OF
GREAT BRITAIN.

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