

more than the quantity manufactured in all the rest of Great Britain. But the low price to which iron has of late sunk (about £9 or £10 sterling per ton) has in a great measure destroyed this formerly lucrative manufactory. No less than 32 of the 68 furnaces have stopped, or *been blown out*, as the phrase is in Staffordshire. The Welsh iron manufacturers, it seems, produce a greater proportion of iron from their ore, and work with less coals than they can do in Staffordshire. They are able, in consequence, to undersell them. This opposition has been carried so far as to sink the price of iron much lower than it seems possible to manufacture it at. Before the late peace it sold at £18 per ton, which was almost double its present price.

Tracts of coal occur in this coal-field distinguished by a blacker colour, possessed of less lustre, and burning with less flame, than the common coal. Such tracts are called *blacks*. It contains less bitumen, and approaches nearer to coke than the rest of the coal. In cracks of the superincumbent beds there occur shining pieces of coal, like Kilkenny coal. According to Mr. Kier, it is imbedded in cubic cells, formed by thin planes of calcareous spar, intersecting each other at right angles.

This coal-field contains a less number of sand-stone beds than the coal-formations in Scotland and the north of England. The slate-clay, called in that country *clunch*, is harder, has more lustre, and is composed of finer particles, than slate-clay in the coal-formation generally is. The *batt* is black slate or shale, which may be split into very thin fragments, and which in general contains much less bitumen than bituminous shale. It approaches more nearly to *drawing-slate* in its appearance, only its slaty fragments are much thinner. The clay-iron-stone occurs in various beds, but is only wrought in two; namely, in the bed that occurs under the broach coal in the neighbourhood of Wednesbury, and in that which occurs under the main coal. This last is the bed usually wrought for iron ore. This ore is what mineralogists term *clay-iron-stone*. It is, in fact, a carbonated hydrate of iron, usually mixed with clay. Probably the proportion of clay is greater here than in Wales. This would account for the greater produce of the Welch ones, and the smaller quantity of fuel which they consume. This iron ore, when taken out of the mine, is built up in heaps called *blooms*, four feet long, three feet wide, and 22 inches high. It is considered as weighing 35 cwt., each cwt. being 120 lb. : 1000 or 1200 such blooms are usually got from an acre of good mine.