

Nearly 30 years since some excitement was produced upon this subject, but what was supposed to be coal, proved to be merely bituminous shale, which is not uncommon in that formation.

CHAPTER VI.

IRON ORES.

Although the production of iron in Maryland at this time is much less than in some other of the United States, yet there is reason to believe that the first smelting furnaces in North America were erected and worked in Maryland whilst our territory was under the dominion of England. The smelting was *permitted* because of the increasing demand for iron and scarcity of wood in Britain for making charcoal, which was the only fuel used until about the year 1740, when coke began to be applied to this purpose.

At first the colonists were prohibited by law from producing any other than cast or pig iron, in order that the inhabitants of the mother country might have the profits of freighting and working up the metal into the various kinds of manufactures which were exported to America. At length it was deemed the interest of England, owing to the high cost of charcoal, to permit the pig iron to be converted into bar iron in her colonies, but the law prohibited the erection "*of rolling and slitting mills, and forges for making plates, as that would interfere with the manufacturers of Great Britain.*" The revolutionary war proved disastrous to the iron smelters and closed nearly all their works. There was a partial revival at the close of the war, and since then the business has sometimes been actively prosecuted and often much prostrated, because of the frequent changes of the rates of duties on imported iron, as well as revulsions in trade.

Iron ores exist in great abundance in certain parts of Maryland, and few if any of the States possesses so many different kinds of this, the most useful of all metallic ores.

In describing them I shall begin with those in the south-eastern part of the State and proceed successively to the deposits northward and westward.

a. *Bog Ores of the counties of Worcester, Somerset, Dorchester and Caroline.*

The above name has been applied to this variety of ore from the fact that it occurs in bogs or marshes wherein it is deposited