

CHAPTER II

DERBYSHIRE AND NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COAL AND IRON

SOUTH of Sheffield, extending to Derby, the district covers a thoroughly English industry, less dependent perhaps on foreign trade than any other coal and iron area in the kingdom. Of the 33,000,000 tons of coal annually raised in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, with the addition of the Leicestershire pits, which form for official purposes one field, not 5 per cent. is sent abroad; while the pig and finished iron made in the works of the eight great companies and the smaller firms who control that industry are chiefly consumed at home.

The pig iron goes to Yorkshire, Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Lancashire and the Eastern Counties, but there is, besides, a very large local consumption. The rolling-mills and foundries connected with the blast furnaces turn out great quantities of material, which are absorbed not only in the local collieries and other trades, but also in the Midlands, in London and in the south, where, however, they come into competition with the sea-borne products of Middlesbrough and the Tees.

Iron as well as lead has been worked in Derbyshire for centuries. The "mine ore" formerly used in the open furnaces was found locally in connection with the coal measures, being smelted with charcoal. In 1740 only two furnaces were making charcoal iron, with a joint yearly output of 550 tons. The country is still dotted with old surface workings whence the ore was derived. Much of it was carried on the backs of mules or ponies over bridle-