

CHAPTER IV

ROTHERHAM AND LINCOLNSHIRE STEEL

ROTHERHAM historians date the connection of Rotherham with the manufacture of iron as contemporary with the beginning of the iron trade of Sheffield. Indeed, the first recorded instance of iron-making in Rotherham is similar to the case of Sheffield, viz., the permission given by Lord de Busili as Lord of the Manor of Kimberworth to the Monks of Kirkstead in Lincolnshire in 1161 to erect four forges at Kimberworth. Kimberworth lies between Sheffield and Rotherham. Evidences exist of the continuous working of ironstone in the parish of Kimberworth from the earliest times. No doubt this ore found its way to Sheffield for smelting. This inference is supported by the entry in the Sheffield Register under date 1650, referred to in a previous chapter, that in this century steel was made at Rotherham and brought to Sheffield. This steel was that made prior to the advent of the Huntsman process.

The great event, however, in the iron industry of Rotherham was the appearance on the scene of the Walker family. About 1748 Samuel Walker, the village schoolmaster at Grenoside, near Sheffield, erected a small foundry attached to the farm in which he lived, which turned out annually about 5 tons of castings. Two years later he set up furnaces at the Holmes, with a larger output. Ultimately the firm developed its plant to such an extent that it was employed by the Government to make guns. About the year 1813 it turned out annually some 3,000 tons weight of these. The activities of the Walker family encouraged