

CHAPTER VII

THE LANCASHIRE COALFIELD

UNDER this head may be included the colliery areas of Lancashire and Cheshire. It is one of the older coal districts of this country, in which the better and more easily worked seams are approaching exhaustion. In Lancashire the workable coal extends from Burnley in the north to Oldham and Ashton on the Cheshire border on the south-east, and to Wigan and St. Helens on the south-west. Stockport is the centre of the Cheshire district. There are more than three thousand million tons of coal still available in Lancashire, while Cheshire brings up this total to over four thousand million tons, of which probably a thousand millions could not be worked at a profit.

Most of the coal is found in seams of 24 in. thick and upwards, though many seams of good quality, but not more than 18 in. thick, are worked to-day. The average output for the last twenty-five years has not exceeded 20,000,000 tons per annum, which is produced by 100,000 men. The depth of some of the most valuable seams is great. The coal known as the "Arley Mine" is found at a depth of 750 yards but above that there are numerous seams of house coal, steam coal, gas and coking coal, and cannel. Owing to the dip of some of these seams, however, the colliery workings are often at a much lower level. The Bradford colliery near Manchester is worked at 900 yards deep, while the workings to the dip of one of Andrew Knowles & Sons' collieries have reached a depth of 1170 yards. This involves a temperature at the face,