

## CHAPTER XX

### STAFFORDSHIRE COAL AND IRON

THE South Staffordshire coalfield, which is usually classed with those of Shropshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire, dominates, from a metallurgical point of view, Birmingham and all the South Midland counties with its coal, iron, steel and non-ferrous metallurgical trades. These embrace every kind of product from the heaviest machine tools down to jewellery and watches. John Leland in his itinerary visited Birmingham in 1538. He writes: "There be many smithes in the towne that use to make knives and all manner of cutting tooles and many loriners that make bittes and a great many naylors. Soe that a great part of the towne is maintained by smithes who have their iron and sea cole out of Staffordshire."

Charcoal from the local forests was, however, used for smelting the iron in earlier days. "Dud Dudley" has been regarded as the father of the Staffordshire iron trade. In 1619 a patent was granted him for smelting in a coal-fired furnace. He worked this at Pensnett, where plenty of coal was at hand, and where the Dudley works still exist. He left a chronicle in which it is stated that a year after the grant of the patent "much good merchantable iron" was carried to the Tower of London from Staffordshire by King James' command "to be tryed by all artists, and they did very well approve of the iron."

Works were established on the streams where water power was available, as at Broseley and Ironbridge on the Severn, at Coalbrookdale, at Erdington, on the Stour at