

2 BRITISH COAL INDUSTRY

we may encounter wrongs long dead but still living in memory and affecting viewpoint, so that we may obtain 'atmosphere,' and see something of the way in which the industry has developed and of the conditions under which it has been carried on.

Within recent years the status of the industry and its workers has entirely changed. From being the Cinderella of Labour it has become the Princess, and its leaders now speak on equal terms with Ministers instead of being ordered by magistrates to go back to their homes peaceably and not trouble the august personages in London, as were the demonstrators who dragged their loads of coal to the Metropolis in the hope of laying their woes before the Prince Regent during the distress which followed on the Signing of Peace in 1815. To-day many of the owners of coal-mines are in the forefront of the business world. Several, like the late Lord Rhondda, have stamped their name on the history of the country. To-day colliery management is a subject of high technicality requiring long training and much specialized knowledge. A hundred years ago matters were very different. A few great names stand out from a throng of persons who were mediocre, conservative and slow. Yet even in the early days of the industry there were, as we shall see, constant efforts being made to improve the technical conditions of coal-mining. Surveying the history of our subject as a whole we can say that it shows a constant though