

THE COAL RESOURCES OF INDIA

BY

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(With One Map in the Atlas)

INTRODUCTION

THE development of the coal resources of India is still in an early stage, and much exploratory work must be done before it will be possible to make an accurate estimate of the country's stores of this fuel. The first attempt to do this was made nearly fifty years ago by the late Dr. T. Oldham, Superintendent of the Geological Survey, and although our information is now, in certain respects, considerably more precise, we are still far from being in a position to ascertain, even approximately, our total resources; the figures embodied in this note do not pretend to do more than give an idea of the approximate order of magnitude of the coal supplies of India.

Of the total number of possible fields, only 18 are at present being worked, whilst 3 alone produce 89 per cent. of the whole annual out-turn. The question of quality also introduces an additional and important element of uncertainty into any attempted calculations. For commercial purposes, the material obtained from the chief Indian fields is classified roughly into first and second class; the latter, being of inferior quality and high in percentage of ash, is at present mined only to a limited extent where the better quality is available. Very few Indian coal-fields are sufficiently developed to permit of any attempt at apportioning their resources between these two grades. Mr. R. R. Simpson, Inspector of Mines in India, has, however, recently endeavoured to estimate the quantity of first-class coal in the two chief fields of Bihar (Raniganj and Jherria), but the figures so obtained naturally cannot be employed as criteria for similar estimates with regard to other coal-fields. Consequently, although we are safe in asserting that the total coal resources of India are enormous, we are not yet in a position to form even a rough estimate as to the percentage of them which can be regarded as meeting the present-day requirements of a satisfactory steam-coal.

Furthermore, the total depth to which the seams extend is quite unknown. Even in the three chief fields, work is still confined to comparatively shallow depths of about a thousand feet. Consequently, the estimates included in the present note, except in the case of Baluchistan and the Margherita mines of Assam, refer only to coal at depths considerably less than 4,000 feet.