



Fig. 90. View of the Salt Works at Mason City, West Virginia.

CHAPTER XXVI.

SOMETHING ABOUT ROCK-SALT AND GYPSUM.

COMMON salt, upon which the chemist has imposed the more dignified title of chloride of calcium, is a mineral almost universally distributed through the stratified portion of the earth's crust. Like those other substances of universal utility to man—petroleum, coal, iron, water, and lime—it is supplied by Nature to every habitable region of the terrestrial surface. Like lime, which is the chief constituent of the bones and teeth of man and the other vertebrates, the shells of molluscous animals, and the mountains of coral accumulations reared in the bottom of the sea, common salt also subserves the necessities not only of man, but of the quadrupeds and various other terrestrial animals, including insects, and is the characteristic constituent of sea-water, the home of two thirds of all the animals now existing, and a much larger proportion of the animals of former geological ages.