

The Iron and Metal Markets

FURTHER RAIL BUYING

Gradual Improvement in Mill Operations

Weakness in Plate Prices—Sharp Advances in Copper and Spelter

On the whole the reports from works give rather a better account of the steel trade than current sales. But it is to be noted that mills have been shutting down and resuming and that only the resumption gets publicity.

The Steel Corporation's report of \$10,900,000 earnings in the last quarter of 1914, or \$2,500,000 less than the previous low record, in 1904, shows that the last two months of the year were worse than was generally known at the time. The figures should serve to check the tendency in some quarters to take too favorable a view of January conditions, for it has been a creeping improvement and nothing more.

Some further rail orders have been given out—close to 75,000 tons in the West, of which 40,000 tons went to the Colorado mill, made up of 20,000 tons for the Missouri Pacific and 10,000 tons each for the Burlington and the Rio Grande. The Chicago & Eastern Illinois bought 15,000 tons and the Union Pacific 10,000 tons. The Burlington has placed another supplemental order of 5000 tons at Chicago. The St. Paul and the Rock Island are inquiring for about 25,000 tons. Eastern mills have taken 15,000 tons for the Boston & Maine; the Interborough is asking for 5000 tons and the New York, Ontario & Western for 3500 tons.

In the export trade the chief item is the booking of 10,000 tons of rails for the Chilean State Railways. France has bought 10,000 tons in England and Germany has an order from Sweden for 15,000 tons. In spite of high freights some business in semi-finished steel for England has been taken here, including 8000 tons of billets which the Tennessee Company will roll. In wire and shrapnel bars the export demand seems to have subsided. The French reconstruction of bridges, investigation by American structural mills shows, will largely await the ending of the war. Steel for smaller repairs has been placed in England.

Recent rail orders will give the Gary mill work for two months, and in view of its starting up on February 8 one of the idle blast furnaces there has been blown in. The Steel Corporation is also to blow in this week a furnace at Lorain, Ohio, and two in the Pittsburgh district. Active ingot capacity of the corporation is now close to 50 per cent.

In structural work a somewhat better prospect is indicated. About 37,000 tons is represented in live projects in the East, including 15,000 tons for the Pennsylvania Railroad and 13,000 tons for third tracking of elevated railroads in Brooklyn. For track elevation at Indianapolis 20,000 tons will be required and bids are being made on 9500 tons for a bridge in Vancouver.

Pipe line work has come in well. With 155 miles of 8-in. pipe for the Magnolia Petroleum Company and 26 miles of 8-in. pipe for a gas company in Oklahoma, the total closed is 1000 miles.

With a total of 11 vessels now under contract, three about to be placed and others pending, Eastern shipyards look forward to one of their busiest years, apart from the Government's naval programme that will come later.

Galvanized sheets have already advanced \$3 a ton, or to 2.90c. for No. 28 due to the sharp rise in spelter, and sellers of sheets are none too ready to quote this figure.

The British market for hematite iron is less excited, following the postponement of Rubio ore and East Coast hematite pig iron contracts. At 100 shillings, or \$24.30, now asked for hematite, some business could be done with this country on odd lots worked in at moderate freights. A number of British inquiries have been figured on, calling for sulphur and phosphorus under 0.05 per cent., but without sales thus far.

Mills have booked a fair amount of business in January on bars and structural shapes at 1.10c, Pittsburgh, and the prospect of price readjustments in case a lower level should be established has helped to hold the lines under none too steady conditions. In plates Chicago district sales have been made on a 1.05c. Pittsburgh basis, and there have been such sales also in Central Western territory. One seller of bars asks 1.15c. for March delivery.

Pig iron markets, particularly for Southern iron, are under the pressure of the large stocks accumulated at furnaces. Foundries in Central territory, chiefly jobbing foundries, show some increase in their melt.

The copper and spelter markets have advanced sharply. In the former the extent of the curtailment of production and of the new demand from Europe has figured largely in the comment of the week, with fresh indications that producers have the situation well in hand. That some large spelter interests have declined to quote is significant of further advances.

A Comparison of Prices

Advances Over the Previous Week in Heavy Type. Declines in Italics

| | At date, one week, one month, and one year previous | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| | Jan. 27, 1915 | Jan. 20, 1915 | Dec. 30, 1914 | Jan. 28, 1914 |
| Pig Iron, Per Gross Ton: | 1915 | 1915 | 1914 | 1914 |
| No. 2 X, Philadelphia... | \$14.25 | \$14.25 | \$14.25 | \$14.75 |
| No. 2, Valley furnace... | 13.00 | 13.00 | 13.00 | 12.75 |
| No. 2 Southern, Cin'ti... | 12.40 | 12.40 | 12.40 | 13.75 |
| No. 2, Birmingham, Ala... | 9.50 | 9.50 | 9.50 | 10.50 |
| No. 2, furnace, Chicago* | 13.00 | 13.00 | 12.75 | 13.50 |
| Basic, del'd, eastern Pa. | 13.50 | 13.50 | 13.50 | 14.00 |
| Basic, Valley furnace... | 12.50 | 12.50 | 12.50 | 12.50 |
| Bessemer, Pittsburgh... | 14.55 | 14.55 | 14.70 | 14.90 |
| Malleable Bess., Chgo* | 13.00 | 13.00 | 12.75 | 13.50 |
| Gray forge, Pittsburgh... | 13.45 | 13.45 | 13.45 | 13.40 |
| L. S. charcoal, Chicago... | 15.75 | 15.75 | 15.75 | 15.25 |

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Billets, etc., Per Gross Ton: | 1915 | 1915 | 1914 | 1914 |
| Bess. billets, Pittsburgh... | 19.50 | 19.50 | 19.00 | 20.50 |
| O.-h. billets, Pittsburgh... | 19.50 | 19.50 | 19.00 | 20.50 |
| O.-h. sheet bars, P'gh... | 20.50 | 20.50 | 20.00 | 21.00 |
| Forging billets, base, P'gh... | 24.00 | 24.00 | 24.00 | 24.00 |
| O.-h. billets, Phila... | 21.40 | 21.40 | 21.40 | 22.40 |
| Wire rods, Pittsburgh... | 25.00 | 25.00 | 25.00 | 25.50 |

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|-------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Old Material, Per Gross Ton: | 1915 | 1915 | 1914 | 1914 |
| Iron rails, Chicago... | 11.50 | 11.50 | 11.25 | 13.00 |
| Iron rails, Philadelphia... | 13.00 | 13.00 | 13.00 | 16.00 |
| Carwheels, Chicago... | 10.00 | 10.00 | 9.75 | 12.00 |
| Carwheels, Philadelphia... | 11.00 | 11.00 | 10.50 | 12.50 |
| Heavy steel scrap, P'gh... | 11.50 | 11.75 | 11.25 | 11.50 |
| Heavy steel scrap, Phila... | 10.00 | 10.00 | 9.50 | 11.00 |
| Heavy steel scrap, Chgo... | 9.25 | 9.50 | 8.75 | 9.75 |
| No. 1 cast, Pittsburgh... | 11.25 | 11.25 | 11.25 | 10.75 |
| No. 1 cast, Philadelphia... | 12.00 | 12.00 | 11.75 | 12.00 |
| No. 1 cast, Chgo (net ton) | 9.00 | 9.25 | 9.25 | 10.50 |

*The average switching charge for delivery to foundries in the Chicago district is 50c. per ton.