SOME REMINISCENCES OF THE IRON TRADE.

In the closing week of March, 1902, the demand for all kinds of iron and steel was very heavy, and scarcity was developing in so many lines that fears of a runaway market were entertained by conservative manufacturers, who desired the prices then ruling to be maintained. Bessemer pig iron was selling at $17.50, Pittsburgh, and No. 2 southern foundry at $15, Cincinnati.

"Five years ago," recalls our contemporary, the Iron Age, "the prospect of a war with Spain was depressing the trade, and the suspense was causing all projected improvements to be postponed. American rail manufacturers were actively seeking business abroad, and were then bidding on the great Siberian order. Bessemer pig iron was selling at $10.60, Pittsburg, and No. 2 southern foundry at $9, Cincinnati.

"Ten years ago business was distinctly in the dumps, great eagerness for orders being shown by manufacturers. Billets were well held, but foundry pig iron was being pressed for sale by numerous makers. The conditions were just such as would be presumed to characterize trade on the eve of the financial disturbances and trade depression destined to come a little later in the year. Bessemer pig iron was selling at $14, Pittsburg, and No. 2 southern foundry at $12, Cincinnati.

"Twenty years ago trade was very dull, and owners of blast furnaces were blowing out in apparent concert in the hope of arresting the decline then in progress. Bessemer pig iron was selling at $22.50, Pittsburgh, and stel rails at $39, eastern mill. Charcoal pig iron was supreme in the Cincinnati market, selling at $22 for Alabama brands and $25.50 for Hanging Rock, but southern coke No. 1 was working its way into favor at $21.

"Thirty years ago, in the memorable year 1873, money was tight and great difficulty was experienced in making collections. This was the only unfavorable feature of the market at this time in the spring. No other indication appeared which would cause business men to suspect the financial catastrophe destined to occur in the autumn of that year. The market was quiet in pig iron, but finished iron was in fair demand. At that time Bessemer pig iron had not begun to be conspicuous in the market. Forge pig iron was the leader, and red short was quoted at Pittsburgh at $43. Iron rails were quoted at $80 currency for American at mill, and $70 gold for English at seaboard. The premium on gold at that time was 16 per cent., as this country was then suffering from a depreciated currency. Scotch pig iron was widely used by foundrymen, and Eglinton was quoted at $54, New York, and $60, Chicago. In the Ohio river district Louisville was the prominent pig iron market, and charcoal foundry iron was in leading demand, being quoted at $54 to $56, while coke or 'stone coal' iron, as it was then called, made from Missouri ores, was selling at $54. It is interesting to note that the market reports at that time spoke of English steel-rail mills being run on American orders. American steel rails were beginning to get part of the trade, and were selling at $122.50 in currency at eastern mills. American tool steel was stated to be beginning to take the place of foreign. Bar iron was quoted at Pittsburg at 4 cents a pound and cut nails at $5 a keg."

PIG IRON.

Two sides of the pig-iron market appeal to Rogers, Brown & Co., One, the bear argument, follows: "Three years ago, when iron got above $20 per ton in northern markets, demand suddenly dropped; Gates made a deep cut in wire products; there was a heavy slump in industrial securities; new projects were given up; actual consumption fell off sharply, and the whole iron trade passed through a period of liquidation. Melters of iron think something like this might happen now. They point to present record-breaking rate of production, with further increase in sight. They emphasize the recent cut by southern makers and the decline of about $2 per ton already established, comparing with the highest point." The other view of the situation follows: "Buying of iron, except for urgent needs, has practically stopped for five months. During that period purchases have been less than 50 per cent. of actual consumption. Most melters covered 75 per cent. of their needs only to July 1. Nearly all foundries and mills have taken work in large volume for the last half of the year, and are speculating on raw materials; relatively few have covered. A short interest has grown up of very large proportions. There is a misunderstanding as to relations of supply and demand. We are making, perhaps, 1,500,000 tons more this year than last, but two facts more than offset this; first, buying of foreign iron has stopped. Last year nearly 1,000,000 tons came in. The second fact is still more important; consumers, instead of cutting down sharply as in 1900, are increasing their melt from 5 per cent. to 10 per cent. This means over 1,000,000 tons additional required, so that 4,000 buyers in the country will want to cover at about the same time."

Adair Bros., general merchants, Dawson City, have made an assignment. The liabilities approach $200,000, mostly in Toronto.

A fire at the Royal Paper Company's mills at East Angus, Que., destroyed the sawmill and damaged a pulp mill, causing a loss of $80,000, insurance $70,000.