

becoming so extensive in area and the ore characters met with so varied, that a volume would hardly suffice to describe adequately all that has gone on during the past year, and is still going on. It is well and truly said that comparisons are odious, and while it would be invidious and hardly conducive to the peaceful advancement of the country to carry it to the verge of rivalry, we may with evident advantage note the essential points of difference between the two principal West Kootenay camps, Trail Creek and the Slocan.

When so much outside capital is flowing into Rossland we may surely be excused if a slight feeling of jealousy occasionally asserts itself here. Without wishing to underestimate the value of that camp or relegate it once more into the background, it is well to remember that the net value of Slocan ores is a long way ahead of that from the more famous Trail Creek district, and whatever advancement Rossland may have made during the year, the Slocan also has certainly shown great strides in its production. Statistics after all reveal the true condition of affairs better perhaps than anything else, but for various reasons these are not now available, and it is found impossible to give them here in their entirety. At the beginning of the year extravagant estimates were made by responsible and irresponsible parties as to the probable value of the mineral production for 1896. The more moderate of these have been all but realized, and while it is neither necessary nor in place in this article to go into the various reasons which have led to the non-fulfilment of these predictions, it cannot be amiss to state that so far as the Slocan is concerned, the highest obligations have been fully met.

The advent of the iron horse into Sandon and vicinity has worked wonders in that camp, and made it possible to ship ore by means of competing railways at a minimum cost. There is some danger that if sampling works are erected at Northport and Bonner's Ferry, as projected by the United States Government, the competition will cease, at least for a while. The inevitable, however, is sure to come sooner or later and the long looked for day when home smelters shall be erected at convenient and central points will be thereby hastened and its ill effects remedied. Not only so, but the still serious question of freight rates as compared with other important mining centres, will be thoroughly reconsidered and materially reduced. Amidst all the progress and advancement of the year these vital wants appear to have been almost wholly neglected. For some still unexplained reason the one smelter in the country so far capable of treating Slocan ores successfully, was closed early in the year and never since reoperated. The present output of the mines should suffice to keep more than one smelter hard at work, and with the certain increase which is sure to follow, there need be no alarm felt as to the source of future ore supplies. It is to be hoped that the active measures in contemplation in connection with both the Nelson and Trail smelters will soon mature, so that Slocan ores may find a ready market at home.

There seems to be literally no end to the marvellous wealth of this section, regions previously regarded as unproductive, now contribute their

quota towards the increased output, and new camps are springing up in every direction.

Sandon, as the great centre of mining activity, has more than held its own; despite its many natural drawbacks, the enterprise of its citizens and the wonderful riches lying hidden at its very door suffice to keep it in the front rank among progressive mining camps. It is said that there is more money in circulation in Sandon to-day per capita than in any other town in the country, and one can well believe it.

Palatial hotels and residences are being everywhere erected and there is an air of permanence about the place that not even Rossland can surpass.

Among the many improvements of the year the inaugurating of an efficient waterworks system, and the installation of the electric light, stand out conspicuous, and might be copied with advantage by other towns in the neighbourhood.

The danger from fire, the natural enemy of towns so situated, has been reduced to a minimum, and the citizens showed commendable foresight in having the matter attended to before serious damage was done. The banking fraternity has at last awakened to its responsibilities in these regions.

After vigorous efforts on the part of influential citizens and the local press, the Bank of British Columbia has at last been induced to establish a branch office here, the first incorporated bank in the Slocan, and it is hardly necessary to say it will be highly appreciated and supported by those who formerly had to remit all the way to Nelson. The name Sandon brings forcibly to our minds that now magic expression Slocan Star. During the year the reputation of this, the Slocan's greatest mine, has not only not suffered but become greatly enhanced. It still stands pre-eminent among the mines of the province, and during the year, notwithstanding extensive outlay on improved concentrating plant, it has managed to pay the magnificent sum of \$200,000 in dividends up to the present, with a prospective \$50,000 more before the year closes. Who would not be proud of such a record as this? Several times in the last few months the great mine has been reported sold at sums varying from two to two and a half million dollars, but even at the latter enormous figure the owners display little desire to part with it. The large contract entered into with the Omaha smelter people has been satisfactorily discharged and 12,000 tons of Star ore has found its way to their establishment during the past twelve months. The concentrator, naturally the best equipped in the Slocan, has been working uninterruptedly on nearly two hundred tons of ore a day, and is giving complete satisfaction. With regard to the future prospects of the mine, the reported price offered speaks for itself in very eloquent and unmistakable language. A fifth tunnel has been started to tap the lead at a depth of over 600 feet, and there is no doubt, from present indications, that the value will continue. As about one hundred men find employment in connection with the working of this property, its importance to the community can be readily estimated. The controlling interest in the Ruth, another great mine, which it is thought may in time become a formidable competi-