

IT is somewhat unfortunate that owing partly to the difficulty Mr. Robertson, the provincial mineralogist, experienced in obtaining returns from some few mine-owners in the Sloecan and Nelson districts, and partly to the strain on the capacity of the Government Printing Department, by reason of special sessional work, the report of the Minister of Mines for last year will not be issued until well towards the close of April. It is unfortunate, because the showing made by the mining industry in 1900 was exceptionally good, and the sooner the details are officially published, the better.

#### THE MINERAL OUTPUT.

Last December, however, the provincial mineralogist gave to the local press an advance estimate of the mineral production of the Province for the year 1900, the corrected returns having been laid before the Legislature the early part of the present month. It is interesting to compare the estimate with the actual figures in the following table:

	Placer Gold, \$.	Lode Gold, \$.	Silver, oz.	Copper, lbs.	Lead lbs.
Mr. Robertson's estim.	1,500,000	3,500,000	3,800,000	10,000,000	45,000,000
Actual figures.....	1,278,721	3,453,381	3,958,175	9,967,080	63,358,621
Error .....	+221,276	+46,619	-158,175	+22,920	-18,358,621
Error in per cent.....	+17.3%	+1.3%	-3.9%	+0.2%	-28.9%

It will be seen from the foregoing that the at all serious discrepancies were those in reference to the estimation of the placer gold yield, and of the lead output, while the computation of the copper production was so close that in view of the impossibility under our present system of obtaining accurate and complete statistics at regular intervals from the mining districts, it can only be regarded as remarkable. An over-estimation of the placer gold output was excusable, as the falling off of the production from the Atlin district could have been hardly anticipated; and though a large increase was looked for in the lead output, such a gain as 206 per cent. was certainly not expected by the most sanguine.

Turning to the corrected returns, as printed in the summary, we find that in 1900 the total production, inclusive of coal, building material, etc., is valued at \$16,407,645, or an increase of nearly 33 per cent. over the 1899 returns. The metalliferous output alone, however, shows an increased value of approximately 40 per cent.; as the placer gold production fell off 5 per cent., the advance was all on the side of the lode mines, from which, consequently, the returns are still more gratifying. Meanwhile, it is to be noted that the percentage of increase is divided as follows: Lode gold, 21; silver, 38; copper, 19.5, and lead, 206. The gain in gold may be ascribed to the greater tonnage put out last year from Rossland, although the ratio of increase, owing to the fact that the improvement in economic conditions allowed lower grade ores to be mined and treated is necessarily in the direction of tonnage, as against values; and to the development of the mines of the Boundary district and of the Coast. The same remarks apply as regards the in-

creased copper production, though in the future Rossland will probably take quite third place as one of the copper producing centres of the country, for even now the copper output from the comparatively few developed mines on the Coast approaches, if it does not equal, that of the former district. Boundary district will undoubtedly take first place. The large increase in the production of lead and silver is, of course, attributable to the opening up of one or two rich mines in East Kootenay, and also to the better conditions which prevailed in the Sloecan district last year. Perhaps, however, the most satisfactory intelligence contained in the summary before us, is that the aggregate tonnage of ore raised in the Province last year, exceeded that of 1899 by no less than 93 per cent., and that the number of shipping mines was also materially added to. This means that the conditions of mining—the reduction in the cost of treatment and better transportation facilities—have improved during the past twelve months, that developed mines in the older districts have been able to mine ore of a grade previously unprofitable, and that by the construction of railways to districts until last year unprovided with adequate communication advantages, the productive area has been considerably augmented.

Another pleasing feature in this report is the evidence of a further expansion of our coal trade, the output from the collieries of Vancouver Island and East Kootenay having shown a gain of 25 per cent. in the past year. The development of the coal areas in the Crow's Nest Pass and the favourable market conditions on the Pacific sea-board are alike responsible for this improvement.

British Columbia may now be said to have entered another epoch in the history of her mining development. She is to-day in much the same position as was Colorado some years ago, when the smelting industry was first established in that State. The total mineral production of Colorado in 1880 was valued at fifteen millions; by 1890 it had increased to fifty-two millions, and in 1900 to over six hundred millions. That is to say, for the last ten years it has averaged in value over fifty-five million dollars annually. The mineral area in Colorado is very much less than it is in British Columbia.

In 1880 Colorado metallurgists were confronted with problems as difficult of solution as any of those which the British Columbia smelters have been called upon to solve; and, as a result of the successful solution of those problems, may be traced the present pre-eminence of the mining industry in Colorado. In many respects the early history of the industry in the two countries bear a close resemblance. In both the discovery of rich placer fields was the beginning of mining activity and investigation; again, in both cases the exhaustion of the shallow diggings led to the prospecting for quartz, the subsequent discoveries of lode mines, unworkable at first, by means of the refractory nature of the ore, and the high costs of transportation and treatment; the gradual reduction of these costs by the establishment of local smelters and railways