

The fact which has attracted the most attention during the year drawing to a close has been the position in which our silver-lead mines have been placed by the attitude adopted towards them at the beginning of the year by the American Smelting & Refining Company. By refusing to buy ore on the New York valuation of lead, that corporation was able to close the American market to British Columbia silver-lead ores and bullion, and it did so with a suddenness and completeness which left nothing to be desired. It was necessary thereafter for our ores to be smelted and refined in the United States in bond for re-export or else shipped direct to Europe. This involved a direct loss of $\frac{5}{8}$ of a cent a pound, the difference between the duty on ore and bullion and refined lead entering the United States, and an indirect loss of a cent a pound due to the distance of the English market, and the circuitous methods necessary to reach it. When these charges were coupled with a heavy and continuous decline in the European prices of lead, the outlook before the silver-lead mining industry of British Columbia became very serious indeed. If it had not been that many of our silver-lead ores contain a very high percentage of silver, the industry would have been temporarily extinguished. As it is, instead of a growth commensurate with the expansion of the year 1900, a considerable contraction in the output of lead is noticeable. A rough calculation based upon the United States imports of Canadian lead as given by the Bureau of Statistics of the Treasury, and the shipments of lead ore direct to Europe from the St. Eugene mine, would give the lead output of the Province during the year 1901 at about 25,000 tons, a decrease of 20 per cent, under the output of 1900. In money value, however, the decrease will be very much larger, amounting to about \$1,500,000, or between 50 and 60 per cent. In spite, however, of the untoward circumstances which have brought this about, there remains an increase in lead production over 1899 of over 100 per cent.

The Dominion government has endeavoured to relieve the lead industry by assisting the establishment of a Canadian refinery. But various causes have, so far, prevented this project from being matured. The difficulty of location so as to secure all the output of all the mines, and the falling market in Europe, rendering a price at which a sufficient tonnage could be secured, a matter of doubt, have been two of the most important of those reasons. Now, however, it is generally admitted that the price of lead has reached bed rock, and still the silver-lead mines of the Province are continuing to produce in such quantities as to guarantee a sufficient tonnage of bullion, so that the erection of a Canadian refinery is likely to be proceeded with. A steady improvement in production has been noticeable during the closing months of the year and the outlook is not without favourable features.

The Province's output of silver, although it is intimately connected with the production of lead, will not be found to have suffered to anything like the same ex-

tent. There are three reasons for this. In the first place, the reduction in tonnage had taken place largely among the mines which are low grade in silver value, while the production of high-grade dry ores has increased. In the second place, the renewal of operations at the Hall mines during the last six months of the year, replaces a supply totally cut off during 1900, and, in the third place, the gold-copper ores of Rossland and the Boundary contain something in the neighbourhood of one ounce of silver per ton and the increase on tonnage in these mines has been so great as to have an appreciable effect in making up for the deficiency in silver-lead mines. It is questionable whether silver will show a very material decrease this year. It should give evidence of a large increase over 1899 and the industry of silver mining is, apart from the price of silver, which continues to drop, in a thoroughly healthy condition, and likely to continue to exhibit steady and material progress. It is to gold and copper we must look to sustain the reputation of the Province during 1901, particularly the latter.

With regard to copper the only cloud upon the horizon during the year now passed has been the strike at Rossland. This dispute was really the culmination of a long series of bickerings in which the employes and the miners had failed to come to any permanently harmonious understanding. In its effect upon the industry of mining at Rossland it was undoubtedly complicated by the breakdown of Mr. Whitaker Wright in London and the difficulties in which the War Eagle Consolidated Co. and the Centre Star Company to a lesser extent, had involved themselves. Its ultimate effect will not be by any means injurious as it has shown that such a contest is not lightly to be entered into on either side in the hope of an easy victory. We may expect a spirit of compromise and mutual concession to mark the relations between labour and capital in the mining industry as its consequence. In spite, however, of this distressing difficulty, and the interruption to which productive operations were subjected on account of it, the tonnage of the Rossland district has increased from 217,636 tons to in the neighbourhood of 290,000 tons, while the very satisfactory position in the affairs of the Centre Star mine during the past year is an indication that a profitable and prosperous future is before the mines of the Rossland district.

The year now drawing to a close is the first complete year in which the gold-copper mines of Boundary district have been continuously productive, and it is not using the language of exaggeration to describe it as a year of stupendous achievement. Contrary to the usual experience of mining districts, the furnace capacity of the smelters has been unequal to the abundance of ore available, and, from the first of January to the present date, there has not been a single interruption to the productive stream. As a consequence the output of the district has grown from 103,426 tons in 1900 to something in the neighbourhood of 375,000 tons in 1901. Were the ore of the same value as that pro-