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### ONTARIO AS A MINERAL PRODUCER.

One feels almost apologetic to discuss in December, 1909, the production of minerals during the twelve months ended December, 1908. While recognizing the enormous amount of work entailed in producing such an excellent report as that of the Ontario Bureau of Mines just issued, its value is considerably decreased by its publication eleven months after the close of the year under review. The mineral output of Ontario during 1908 was valued at \$25,637,617 as against \$25,019,373 in 1907. The metallic products, the principal of which were silver, pig iron, nickel and copper, furnished 65 per cent. of the total value, and the non-metallic substances 35 per cent. Of the latter, the most important was Portland cement, while the value of natural gas produced in the Province for the first time was greater than that of petroleum, the former being nearly one million dollars and the latter a little over seven hundred thousand dollars. The production of petroleum in Ontario appears to be a declining industry. In the near future, the seat of activity in this direction will probably be transferred to the Athabasca regions, north of Edmonton. Natural gas production in Ontario is increasing considerably, the value in 1904 being only \$253,524 and last year nearly \$1,000,000.

In view of the interesting cement situation in Canada, the figures are interesting. Natural rock cement in 1904 produced in the Province was valued at \$65,250. This had declined in 1907 to \$5,097, while last year the record was blank. On the other hand, the production of Portland cement has greatly increased during the past five years. The figures in 1904 were \$1,239,971; in 1907, they had increased to \$2,777,478. The figures last year showed a slight decline from those of 1907,

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roughly, \$300,000. The 1909 record will probably show a further decrease.

The most important mineral in Ontario is silver, and the most important silver-producing region is Cobalt. The Port Arthur district, where one or two silver mines were operated during the year, contributed to Ontario's record of 1908, 19,444,400 ounces. Of that total, the Cobalt mines produced 19,437,875 ounces, being an increase over the output of 1907 of 94 per cent. Ontario now has the honour to rank third among the silver-producing countries of the world. Mexico heads the list and the United States comes second; Ontario's share of the world's silver output in 1908 was about 11 per cent. This year's figures should show a still greater proportion.

The course of prices for silver last year were no encouragement to mining. The tendency was downward, and has continued that way during the current year. The low prices tend to restrict output, and this has been the case in the Cobalt camp. Had the mines desired to make a larger production there is no doubt they could have done so with ease. While it was stated in New York recently that little profit could come of silver mining at less than 23½d. per ounce, the London price, some of the Cobalt mines who have published their cost sheets allege their ability to produce silver at 23½ to 20.7 cents per ounce.

Mr. T. W. Gibson, Deputy Minister of Mines, Ontario, points out in his statistical review, that the methods employed in valuing mineral products for statistical purposes by the mining departments of the Dominion Government and the several provinces are diverse. He cites one example, which shows that the value assigned to the nickel output of 1908 by the Geo-