vides that the right of action for these penalties shall belong wholly within the province, that the prosecution for the penalty must be brought within three menths from the act or measure complained of, and that the penalty may be wholly or in part remitted by the Minister of Finance. It also provides that prosecutions for a penalty for failure to file the list of members with the registrar of joint stock companies must be brought by the registrar only. The act is made retroactive, except as to costs in actions already begun. This measure is intended to put an end to the numerous suits for penalties begun against incorporated penalties. Similar legislation has, we understand, been passed at Ottawa. These prosecutions were for the most part vexatious, and if allowed to be continued would have worked great injustice to many innocent people without producing any corresponding advantage.

The amendment to the act of 1901 consists in the repeal of sections 2, 3 and 4, which relate to extra provincial companies, and this leaves the law of the province in regard to these in precisely the same position as it was upon the passage of the "Companies Act, 1897." The amendment to **the** "Companies' Clauses Act" relates to penalties and is along the same lines as that above mentioned.

COAL DUST AND EXPLOSIONS IN MINES.

T IS a somewhat curious coincidence that the disaster at the Fernie Colliery should have occurred on the same day of the month, and also under precisely similar conditions to a disastrous accident which took place last year at the Universal mine, in Wales, resulting in an almost equal loss of life. According to a report issued by the Home Office on this explosion, the Union pit was a new one, the colliery was well laid out, the ventilation good, and the engines and equipment generally were of a firstclass description. The system of watering was probably superior to that to be found in many mines: pipes were laid along the main haulage-roads for an aggregate distance of 1,450 yards on either side of the shaft, in which water-cocks were inserted every 40 yards, from which the roads were spraved by means of hoses. In spite of these appliances, it is generally agreed that the whole of the workings at the Universal were dry and dusty when the explosion occurred. From the report of Professor Galloway, based on an exhaustive examination of the workings, the Mining Journal (London) points out that two circumstances are clear-first, that the ex-

plosion followed the course of the intake workings used for haulage, where there was dust and no firedamp, scarcely touching the return-air ways; and, second, that the explosion failed to affect those parts of the workings which were permanently wet from natural causes. Our contemporary proceeds to remark: The fact that coal-dust is far more dangerous in a mine than fire-damp has been more widely recognised of late than when Professor Galloway, in 1875, demonstrated that fine coal-dust plays the part of a quasi-gas when intimately mixed with air, and, as was apparently the case here, itself initiates and carries on the explosion. In the present instance nothing can be known as to the cause of the explosion, the whole of the evidence being circumstantial in character. But, whether the originating cause was shotfiring or an explosion of fire-damp from a blower in some way ignited, it depended for its power on the presence of dust throughout the mine. When once an explosion has occurred in a confined space. the increased pressure and consequent rise in temperature greatly increases the intensity of combustion, so that coal requires wetting more thoroughly than would be the case in the open air. For instance, Mr. Hughes, in his text-book on coal-mining, states that only the smallest amounts of moisture are needed to prevent ignition, a conclusion hardly borne out by the present case. It follows from the knowledge we now possess-that a mixture of coal-dust and air alone is capableof producing an explosion-that the practical question is how to eliminate dust. The use of dust-tight wagons would greatly minimise it, and, supplemented by thorough watering, would no doubt be adequate. Professor Galloway, however, considers, as the result of long experience in the South Wales collieries, that thorough watering suffices to prevent the settling of dust upon walls, roof, and timbering, which, if once allowed to accumulate there, renders watering of the roadways alone of but little effect, as the present case shows. The main difficulty lies in insuring that the wetting is done regularly, though a more systematic inspection for dust on the roof and sides of the workings might correct laxness in this regard. If it were generally recognized by the miners themselves that the real danger of explosion, at any rate on a large scale, is due to dust, and not to firedamp, greater progress would be made towards the fulfilment of Professor Galloway's hope that, with a better understanding of their cause, great colliery explosions will soon disappear from the record of disastrous events.

It is meanwhile satisfactory to learn that the Department of Mines is making very full enquiries, with a view to ascertaining the best methods of preventing the occurrence of accidents in coal mines in this Province resulting from the accumulation of dust in the workings.