

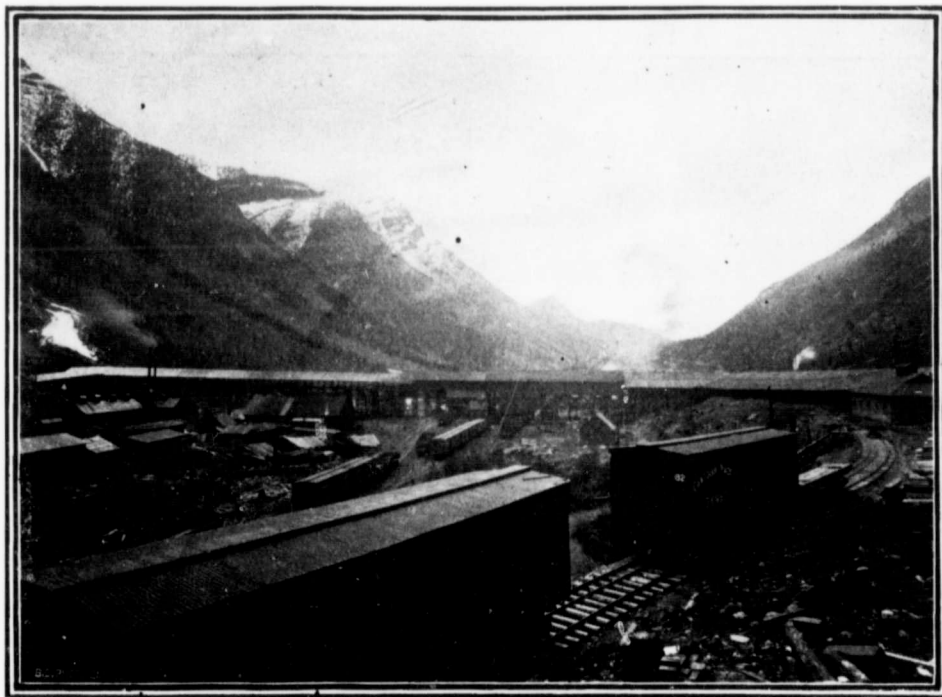
THE FERNIE COLLIERY DISASTER.

By C. H. Gibbons.

THE strange fatality which apparently attaches to festive occasions throughout British Columbia found further illustration in the colliery town of Fernie, not far from the summit of the Crow's Nest Pass, on the eve of the intended celebration of Victoria Day. I refer to the disastrous explosion, which took place last month in the workings in slopes 2 and 3 at Coal Creek, four miles distant from the town, bringing immediate death to

It had been intended to mark Victoria Day (the 24th of May) with sports, parades and band music, the Friday as well as the Saturday being devoted to the celebration; instead, it saw a horror-stricken community, dumb with sorrow, at the mine entrances, while heroic parties of volunteers staked their lives in the restoration of ventilation in the mine, and the recovery of the bodies of their unfortunate companions from the mine workings.

The disaster occurred shortly after seven in the evening, and fifteen minutes later a relief train had arrived from Fernie and the call of volunteers had



Coal Creek Mines, Overground, shewing across the centre of the picture the long tippie connecting No. 1 Mine to Nos. 2 and 3. Entrance to the ill-fated workings marked by snow spot low down on the hillside.

almost all of those employed in the ill-fated shift. The collapse of the Point Ellice bridge at Victoria just seven years before, resulted in the death of 76 persons; the disaster at the Extension mine, Vancouver Island, during the recent visit of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York, cost the lives of 57 workers; in the Fernie explosion the fatalities numbered 151. Investigation of the primary cause of the disaster is now proceeding; directly, the explosion is declared by authorities to have been due to the ignition of dust from the flare of a shot in the machine section, the mine being of the class technically rated "dry and dusty," and insufficiently provided with systematic watering appliances for the guarantee of perfect safety against the accumulation of dust in the workings and the roadways.

been responded to by half a hundred men. Among these were none but Anglo-Saxons, for although Slavs and Hungarians composed quite one-half of the company's working force, it was noted with indignation in the emergency that not one "foreigner" responded to the call of duty and humanity.

It has been remarked that always on the occasion of such a crisis necessity and opportunity for action proclaim the hero. In this case, the man of the hour was a miner named Trueman Weatherby. In the first moments of partial mental paralysis among the official leaders, he took the initiative, and placing himself at the head of the first rescue party, led the way in forcing an entrance to the reeking mine, and during the twenty-four terrible hours that followed worked with tireless activity, directing operations