MEXICAN LETTER.

A CANADIAN'S VIEWS ON MEXICO AND ITS PEOPLE.

Scenes in the Sierra Madre—A Visit to the Magic Cave of Garcia—It is One of the Greatest Underground Wonders of the World—Personals, &c. &c.

I presume all your readers have read more or less about the Mammoth Cave, of Kentucky, and its enchanting chambers; but not one of them have ever heard or read a word about the Magic Cave of Garcia, which is situated in one of the adjacent mountains, northwest of the city of Monterly, Navo Leon, Mexico. As I don't know of anything at this time that would be appreciated by the patrons of your paper, than a description of it, I will try and do so in this letter.

A few weeks ago a number of young ladies and gentlemen visited the cave. At 5 p. m. Saturday, they met at the Monterly and Mexican Gulf railway depot with lunch baskets well filled, and a band of music, all on pleasure bent; and at 5.30 the train pulled out. In one hour they were landed at Garcia, twenty-four miles away. On the arrival of the train they were

MET BY THE MAYOR

and a number of prominent citizens, and escorted to the residence of Senor Francisco Elizondo, where a sumptuous repast was served. After the tables were removed a dance was inaugurated, and kept up until two in the morning. After the dancing the party were served with chocolate, sweat bread, cake, fruit and other light refreshments. When they got through they found burrows (jack asses) ready to carry them to the "La Gloria Cave," six miles away. At 3 a.m. the guides, servants, and musicians led the way, and when they reached the cave, they erected a portable table, and covered it with the whitest of linen untied their lunch baskets, so that by the time the young people arrived they had a sumptuous lunch ready for them. They seated themselves on pilllars of stalagmites, rocks, logs, and camp-stools. After lunch they plucked ferns and palm leaves from the rocks, and had their photographs taken by Senor D. Lagrange, who was one of the party, while the band discoursed sweet music. As the morning was bright and clear, the scenery from the mouth of the cave was enchanting. Off to the east and southeast loomed up the Sierra la Mitra and Sierra de la Silla, or Saddle Mountain; while to the south rose, above them all, the Sierra Madre, whose sierried peaks seemed to pierce the starry skies, while off to the west and northwest, as far as the eye could reach, extends the lesser Sierras, and between them, nestling in their bosom, was picturesque Garcia with her flower gardens and patios full of rose bushes and tropical plants, whose sweet odour was wafted towards them by a gentle breeze that blew in through a canyon from the Gulf of Mexico; while above the horizon, in all his glory and brilliancy, blazed forth Jupiter, the morning star, to light their pathway to the cave, and bid them welcome; while off to the west, perched on a lofty peak, stood Venus, in her night robes to bid them welcome, and "Adios" (God be with you) before she took her morning bath in the broad Pacific. The scenery that spread out before them that bright morning was the

MOST PICTURESQUE

that could be conceived of in Montezumas land.

As soon as they got through with their lunch the guides distributed torches, the gentlemen selected their partners and explorations commenced. It goes without saying that some of the young men were reminded of the quotation, "Those who enter here leave hope behind," for there was more than one of them who buried in the recesses of the cave the hope that they long had cherished of living a bachelor's life. The first chamber that they entered was the "Salon de la Luz," or the chamber of light, which contains thousands of the most marvellous formations that were ever seen in this wonderland. That chamber is very large, the ceiling is lofty and from it are suspended thousands of the whitest of stalactites, which sparkled in the sunlight, that peeped through an unseen opening in the roof, while from the floor arose immense pillars of stalagmites. The sides of that chamber are covered with moss, ferns and floral vines that live and bloom in that silent tomb. While the ladies and gentlemen were admiring the scenes in that wonderful chamber, they were startled by the sound of sweet music which floated in from the adjoining chambers and was carried through it until it reached the vaulted ceiling, when its echo was sent back from whence it came, and again carried to distant chambers until lost to mortal ears.

As the chamber was illuminated by the torches which the party carried, and whose light was blended with the subdued light of the sun, which peeped through the unseen opening alluded to, they photographed their shadows on the walls, which produced a panoramic scene on that occasion, that very few people have an opportunity of witnessing in a lifetime. But the guides would not permit them to tarry long in that chamber, as they had more picturesque ones ahead to show them. They then led them into the salon del Pantistero (Beautiful Chamber). This chamber is full of stalactites, stalagmites, petrified wood, moss, ferns and underground plants, which bud and bloom in that

ENCHANTING CHAMBER.

The next one that the guides led them to was the salon del Agua or Water Chamber, whose waters are as clear as crystal, and they sparkle like diamonds as they skipped and flowed over the polished stones on their way through a subterranean channel to join the blue waters of the Gulf. The waters in that chamber is deep, and it is one of the most romantic places in this wonderland to bathe in. On the walls are to be seen clinging to the rocks in the most fantastic forms, moss, ferns, maiden's hair subterranean shrubs and plants, water lilies, pale flowers and plants, while from the roof are suspended clusters of the whitest of stalacites, which sparkle as bright as the waters beneath them.

The next chamber that they were led to was the Salon de lez Maravilla or the Marvellous Chamber. This is one of the largest that they visited. It is full of statuary, but they were not made by hands. In the middle of this chamber arises an immense column of stalagmite, that took eight of the ladies and gentlemen by joining hands to girdle it.

The next chamber that they were led into was the Salon delas Campanas, or the bell chamber. Every word that is spoken or noise that is made there sound like the ringing of bells, hence the name. It is also full of stalacitites, stalagmites and subterranean formations.

The Salon del Teatro, or theatre, was the next one visited. This chamber is very large and resembles a theatre, hence the name. The members of the band arranged themselves on pillars of stalagmites in front of the stage, while the guides, gentlemen and ladies with torches in their hands took seats on the stage, and as there was a number of vocalists in the party, they sang some choice songs, while the band played operatic pieces. It was a picturesque scene in a romantic place, and one that will never be forgotten by the young people who took part in it.

The last chamber that they visited was the Salon de la Gloria. This is the most picturesque chamber that has yet been discovered in this

WONDERFUL CAVE,

and the young people were slow in leaving it. But before doing so, some of them were reminded of the quotation referred to above, and resolved then and there to bury in the recesses of that chamber the hope that they long had cherished of living a bachelor's life. The pledges that were then made and the sweet words that were whispered, "I love you; will you be mine?" were wafted by invisible angels to the La Gloria beyond the skies, whose floors are paved with gold and lit up with diamonds whose light surpasses that of the sun, and recorded in the book of life by their guarding angels.

When they got through examining the works of nature as displayed in that wonderful chamber, the guides and musicians led the way to the mouth of the cave, where a sumptuous lunch awaited them. Wine, including champagne, was served, toasts drank, and speeches were made, while the band discoursed sweet music.

After lunch the lesser caves were explored until time to return home. But before mounting the burros they formed a circle at the mouth of the cave and joined the band in singing and playing the sweetest of Mexican melodies, La Galindrina (Homeward the Swallows Fly).

At 6 p.m. they mounted the burros, and in one hour more they landed at the residence of their host, Senor Francisco Elizondo, where they spent the night, and at 8 a.m. the next day they boarded the train and in one hour more they landed in Monterey.

The Garcia Cave is one of the greatest underground wonders in the world. If one half of what has been said about it is true, they could put the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky in one chamber of it and have room left for more like it. This cave has been explored in a direct line

FOURTEEN MILES,

and the end was not yet reached. The Cave is within one hour's ride of Monterey. It is surrounded by lofty mountains. There is no stagnant waters within two hundred miles of it. The air and the water in that vicinity are as cool and fresh as when they came from the hands of their Creator. There are no fogs nor cloudy weather there; they have almost perpetual sunshine, hence that is the country for those who are afflicted with lung troubles to go to. They are exempt from northers and cold blizzards, while the waters that run down the mountain sides are always cool, and they sparkle like diamonds as they skip and jump over the polished stones until they join the blue waters of the Gulf.

There is no doubt but what the day is not far distant when some live Yankee or progressive man, will go there, and lease that cave, erecta hotel and put in an electric light plant, and make it a summer and winter resort, for those who are afflicted with lung trouble, as well as tourists who come to this country on pleasure bent.

PERSONAL.

Dr. Andrew McMeans, a native of Brantford, has located in Monterey, and is doing the leading practice among the Americans. I first met him four years ago in Saltillo, the capital of the State of Coahuila. He is surgeon for the Mexican Railroad. Last Monday night I was present when he amputated the thumb and two fore fingers of the left hand of a six year old American boy who was stopping with his mother at the Topo Chico hot springs, and it is needless to say but what he did the work well. He stands at the head of the profession in this country.

EDMOND LEVAN.

Disastrous Famines.

The most disastrous famine of modern times occurred in Northern China in 1877-78. It was so severe that 9,500,000 of the inhabitants perished. The sum of £45,503 was collected in England and forwarded to China for the relief of the distress caused by it. It appears by a Blue Book, published in 1885, that the famine in India in 1878 caused the deaths of 3,500,000 people in the Madras district, and of 2,436,000 people in the Oude district. The potato famine in Ireland in 1846-47 was responsible for over 1,000,000 deaths. In Northwest India, during the famines of 1837-38, over 750,000 of persons perished while in Bengal and Orissa in 1865-666, 1,000,000 deaths ensued. Two years afterward, in Rajpootana, over 1,5000,000 perished from hunger.

A Little Girl's Appeal.

A poor little damsel had trouble with her mother not long ago. The direct consequence was that she was sent into her room for meditation and, supposedly, repentance. A listener happened to overhear the mite's defiance, when she thought herself unobserved and alone. She threw herself on her knees before her bed, and, burying her face in the pillow, began a prayer for guidance. But the petition had this Lord, consider how I'm treated!" Lord, consider how I'm treated!

EXTRAORDINARY WAR.

BRITAIN'S FUNNY CONFLICT WITH A BARBARIAN CHIEF.

The Troops Frightened King Prempeh's Soldiers with Fireworks and Whistling Rockets and They Thought Old Nick Himself Was After Them.

The most peculiar war of modern times has just closed. The ferocious barbarian King of Ashantee has surrendered to the British expedition. The funniest part of it all is the way the English troops frightened the brave African monarch and his warriors almost to death without even firing a gun.

The path from the coast to the interior led through a dense African jungle—an ideal place for an ambush. The army engineers went ahead of the troops with a corps of wood-choppers to clear the way for the army. As the expedition approached the kingdom of the brave King Prempeh they found the woods full of armed savages.

Suddenly the engineering corps, after darkness had settled on the forest, set off an enormous display of sky-rockets, Roman candles, aerial bombs, pinwheels and fire-crackers. They sent the rockets whizzing into the underbrush and exploded the many-colored bombs among the trees. Red, blue and yellow lights glowed here and there and Roman candles shot their exploding balls up over the heads of King Prempeh's ambushed braves.

The warriors were astounded. Their eyes bulged with terror and in five minutes there wasn't a corporal's guard of the valiant army to be seen. The fireworks were kept up all night and at daybreak a courier from King Prempeh crept up to the British picket lines and begged to announce that the King was ready to agree to anything the English commander wanted.

England has been quietly pushing her conquest of Ashantee, while the attention of the world was directed to another part of Africa. Thus a British tentacle in the form of an army of conquest has stretched out from the

GREAT CENTRAL OCTOPUS,

and another kingdom is to be quietly added to the British possessions.

The English propose to "delimit the boundary" of Ashantee by absorbing such of it as possesses gold fields. The purpose of the present campaign against the King of Ashantee, as the English allege, is to stop the inhuman sacrifices of that funny monarch. As was recently described, King Prempeh has been maintaining a private slaughter yard for his enemies. He has 3,333 wives and he orders people's heads cut off whenever it suits his whim. Clergymen all over England were shocked and horrified as they read of the human sacrifices going on in the neighborhood of Coomassie, and as rumors of the new gold fields were circulated a strong desire sprang up for "advancing civilization" in that neighborhood.

Nowhere in the history of war, perhaps, is there record of a campaign so remarkable as this for the methods by which it has been conducted. The English have shown great military intelligence in a foreign campaign.

Perhaps the reason for this is that they went to Coomassie once before and that the present commander-in-chief of the British Army is the gentleman who led that expedition. Lord Wolseley knew what was before the troops.

He knew that a large army of invasion would be auseless encumbrance, and the ordinary British methods would be wholly out of place in Ashantee. He also knew that the followers of King Prempeh were up to date so far as firearms were concerned, but that their knowledge of science was somewhat deficient. The Ashantee warrior will fight when you place a rifle in his hands, but when you confront him with a kinetoscope, a magic lantern or a penny-in-the-slot machine he

GOES ALL TO PIECES.

The way this war has been carried out is the funniest part of the whole opera-bouffe performance. Little or nothing has been said about it in the English newspapers. These publications took the expedition seriously and published lengthy detailed accounts of the preparations as if they were directed against a real military power.

The steamer Angola left Liverpool and arrived at Cape Coast Castle early in December with the first detachment of the expedition. Hidden away down in her hold was an immense quality of skyrockets and Roman candles.

She had tons of these fireworks among her cargo of warlike implements. There were skyrockets of every kind, fire balloons, shooting stars, red, white and blue powders, pinwheels, "snakes," and Chinese fire-crackers.

Another ship followed the Angola similarly loaded and containing no rifles or cartridges whatever. This ship bore no the Gold Coast simply an enormous consignment of fireworks.

Long wooden boxes that looked as if they contained rifles with which to shoot down the warlike Ashantee really had within them harmless skyrockets with patent tails that made fiery streamers of sparks through the African jungle and exploded in gorgeous clusters of stars of every hue. Some of these skyrockets released strings of red balloons of fire to float serenely over the dense Ashantee forests.

Other rockets had bombs in their head and would finally terminate their career with a loud explosion far from the place they have been set off. Still other skyrockets that were taken along on the Ashantee expedition carried a curious whistle and as they shot through the air made a hideous noise that could be heard for many miles and seemed weird and uncanny in the thick tropical forest through which the British forces had to advance.

IN THE ASHANTEE FOREST.

The purpose of this enormous consignment of fireworks carted into the very heart of Africa was to frighten the black satraps of King Prempeh, who have no fear of firearms, but are wholly unacquainted with rockets. The road from the Gold Coast to Coomassie that was cut by the British forces through the dense forests of Ashantee in 1874 had since completely disappeared.

Under the fierce tropical sun, with numerous rains, vegetation grows in a way to astonish people in northern climes. Trees grow by day and night, and a path through the forest closes up behind an army almost as it advances.

It was in getting through this dense forest that the English expected to encounter their greatest difficulty. The Ashantee warriors have no love for fighting in the open.

They appeared to rely upon picking off the British by sharpshooting methods in the jungle. The thick underbrush, the numerous large trees and the dense foliage afforded them every opportunity for concealment.

Even at midday in this forest a semi-darkness prevails. Monkeys are so numerous that you cannot tell whether you are looking at one of their number when you see bright eyes peering at you or whether they may not belong to a bloodthirsty follower of the King.

For this reason the sharpshooters, who were intended to cover the advance of the sappers and miners in cutting a road through the forest, had a most difficult and dangerous task in hand. They could not tell at what minute a shower of bullets would pour in on them from some ambush, while the enemy, all unseen, could reload or move off without losing a man.

ASTONISHING THE NATIVES.

Here it is that the skyrockets, the pinwheels, the "snakes" and the cheap Chinese firecrackers came into play. A well directed rocket shooting between the tree trunks and hissing over the ground with its long train of fire, to finally explode in a gorgeous shower of brilliants, would have more effect in frightening the followers of King Prempeh than a dozen actual shells fired from a mortar.

Blue fire alone is enough to make the ordinary African native quake. Fire crackers make an admirable imitation of musketry fire. To hear a couple of dozen bunches of them go off you would think a thousand men were shooting. Fire balloons, pinwheels and Roman candles are enough to make an army of African natives throw up their hands and surrender.

This is the purpose of the great consignment of fireworks in the Ashantee war, which is funnier in its various aspects even than the Chinese war. The English hired 600 sturdy negroes to hew a way through the forest before they landed the main body of the troops.

These natives were impregnable to the miasmatic fevers of the region. They understood the forest and its strange denizens, and, under the direction of the British sappers and miners, they made an admirable corps of woodsmen.

They had to be protected, however, and this protection from the rifles of Prempeh's men has been secured with the firecrackers and skyrockets. A large quantity of this material has been carried in advance of the corps that was cutting a road through the forest, and it has been sufficient to scare off the enemy.

NEGRO WOMEN HELPED.

Meanwhile the 1,400 or more men who made up the main body of the "army of invasion," as it has been grandiloquently called, remained on troop-ships off the coast, waiting for the road to be completed. Then, of course, the "dash to Coomassie" was an easy matter.

Along the way "rest huts" had been put up where the tired traveller could rest his weary bones and take a drink of half-and-half. The first advance was to the Prah River, where Prahsu was the base of operations. A hospital containing sixty beds had been built here, and a similar hospital had been established at Mansu, nearer the coast.

A bridge was built across the Prah, and as the column advanced beyond that place stations were established with carriers and hammocks for the speedy transportation of the sick to the hospitals or the coast. Telephone wires were also taken along and communication was at all times kept open with the coast.

Stores of every kind had to be carried on the heads of natives, and thousands of women, each to carry fifty pounds, were engaged for work beyond the Prah. Bakers were also sent across the river to bake fresh bread at the defensive posts.

Altogether the expedition included 786 white soldiers, 400 men from the West India regiment and 500 hussars. The artillery consisted of a small mountain battery, a battery of six seven-pounder field guns, a Maxim gun and a large number of rocket tubes. The King of Koranza, who is a neighboring monarch jealous of Prempeh's greatness, volunteered to help the British in "advancing civilization."

THE KING'S HAT DOOMED.

The result of the British expedition to Coomassie in 1874 was summed up by Sir Wilfred Lawson, in the House of Commons, when he said that all the English gained by it was "an old umbrella and a treaty." He was reminded that there had been no treaty, and then remarked that he was not sorry, as the treaty would have been worth no more than the old umbrella.

In this he was referring to the umbrella of state captured by Sir Garnet Wolseley from King Koffee and brought to London. This time they propose to bring back the old plug hat of Prempeh, which has taken the place of the umbrella of state as the symbol of supreme Ashantee power and greatness.

Incidently the slaughter-yard will be put an end to, while the mines will be opened and possibly the golden stool of Prempeh captured and retained for what it is worth per ounce. What the other European powers think of Britain's designs on Ashantee has not yet appeared.

RUSSIA AND TURKEY.

The Reported Alliance Between the Two Countries Denied.

A despatch from Constantinople says that in an interview to-day Halil Rafaat Pasha, the Grand Vizier, declared that the rumors of an offensive and defensive treaty between Russia and Turkey were absolutely unfounded. Such a treaty had neither been concluded nor meditated. In well-informed circles this statement is believed to be probably a mere diplomatic quibble. The arrangement between the two powers may not be embodied in a treaty, but it is becoming to be generally believed that an understanding exists between them that is tantamount to a treaty.

It is customary for Japanese workmen to wear on their caps and backs inscriptions stating their business and the names of their employers.

ROUND THE WHOLE WORLD.

WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE GLOBE.

Old and New World Events of Interest Chronicled Briefly—Interesting Happenings of Recent Date.

The Sultan of Turkey has just been presented with a sumptuously equipped horseless carriage.

There are 12,000,000 silk hats made annually in the United Kingdom, worth £4,000,000 sterling.

In some parts of England people bind up the infant's right hand that it may have riches when grown.

The Manx people believe that it will dwarf or wizen a baby if any one steps over it or walks all around it.

Prince Pedro, of Cobourg, the grandson of the late Emperor Dom Pedro, of Brazil, is now hopelessly insane.

In France 1,550 miles of light railways have been already built, though many of the lines last year were worked at a loss.

Miniature Indian corn grows in Brazil. The ears are about the size of a little finger, and the grains are as littel as mustard seed.

A fat man in Paris, named M. Canon Berg, consumes about five times as much food as an ordinary person. His weight is 560 pounds.

In Yorkshire, Eng., a newborn babe is placed in a maiden's arms before being touched by any one else, in order to insure good luck.

King Humbert of Italy has absolutely no sense of humour, it is said, and regards a joke of any kind as a gross breach of etiquette.

Lieuts. Churchill and Barnes of the British army have been decorated with the Red Cross for gallantry with the Spanish forces in Cuba.

In South America a book, a piece of money and a bottle of liquor are placed before the infant the day it is one year old, to ascertain its bent in life.

J. McNeil Whistler took the seventh prize of $500, at the recent international exhibition at Venice, the only prize awarded to an English-speaking artist.

Herbert Spencer never accepts a college degree nor any other honorary trade-mark from any society. He wants to stand wholly on his own merits or be forgotten.

An Austrian named Dr. Marmbrick, after four years' stay at the Pasteur Institute in Paris, claims to have discovered a secure cure for erysipelas and puerperal fever.

Mrs. Keely, the venerable actress, whose 90th birthday was recently celebrated in London, sang the "Mermaid's Song" in a performance of Oberon, conducted by Weber himself, in 1826.

King Otto, of Bavaria, who has never once since his accession gone beyond the lofty walls of the castle of Furstenried, where he resides under the strictest surveillance has just entered his 48th year.

King Leopold, of Belgium, it is said, detests instrumental music of any kind. It seems to cause him real physical suffering. If anyone sits down at the piano in the King's presence his Majesty swiftly vanishes.

At an official dinner given to the Governor of New South Wales, Cardinal Moran, contrary to precedent, preceded the Anglican Bishop Smith. It is understood that this was in accordance with a decision of the Colonial Office.

It is said in Rome that Pope Leo offered to arbitrate in the Venezuela dispute but that the offer was refused by England. Search is being made in the Vatican archives for original documents bearing on the controversy.

The flying mouse is a recent discovery in the Cameroon country of Africa. It is a link between the bat and the true mouse, has a tail like a mouse, and heavy grey fur, while its wings are not so well developed as those of the bat.

Count Schouvaloff, Governor-General of Poland, has been instructed by the Czar to prepare a memorandum on the subject of the reforms which he proposes for introduction into Poland. The Czar is said to be sincerely anxious to bring about a better state of affairs in Poland.

The late Mr. Andrew Montague of Wetherby, Yorkshire, England, left a personal estate which paid duty on a net valuation of $9,950,000. He left also vast real estates in five counties. The estate duty collected on the personal property alone was $800,000.

One of the most enthusiastic women horticulturists is Miss Alice Rothschild, whose collection of roses alone is said to be worth $50,000. The Archduke of Austria owns flowers to the value of $200,000, and Sir Trevor Lawrence's collection at Dorking is worth over $250,000.

A foot race from Marathon to Athens, twenty-six miles, probably in memory of Phidippides, will be one of the features of the Olympic games, which begin on April 5 and continue till April 15. They will include, besides foot and cycle races, long and high jumps, pole vault, putting the weight, fencing, shooting, tennis, cricket, football, gymnastics, swimming and yacht races. Eight hundred German gymnastics societies are going to enter the games.

The Queen wants to appoint her groom-in-waiting General Sir M. A. Biddulph, to the position of gentleman usher of the Black Rod, made vacant by the death of Admiral Sir J. R. Drummond, if Parliament will permit her to do so. She is willing that the committee of the House of Lords shall fix his salary. The committee is not willing to give its assent, and it certainly will not allow General Biddulph to occupy the old Black Rod's official residence in Westminster. General Biddulph is a pluralist. He is keeper of the jewels in the Tower of London, in addition to being a groom-in-waiting, and is a favourite with the Queen.

Empress Eugenie's Will.

Ex-Empress Eugenie has recently deposited her will with a prominent London attorney, in which, true to her pledge, she has left a legacy to each of the 5,834 male persons of France born on the birthday of her son, Prince Louis.