

were killed and forty-four wounded, of which ten of the killed and twelve of the wounded were Austrian and Hungarian subjects. This deplorable event naturally aroused the solicitude of the Austro-Hungarian government, which, on the assumption that the killing and wounding involved the unjustifiable misuse of authority claimed reparation for the sufferers. Apart from the searching investigation, and the peremptory action of the authorities of Pennsylvania the Federal executive took appropriate steps to learn the merits of the case, in order to be in a position to meet the urgent complaint of a friendly power. The sheriff and his deputies, having been indicted for murder, were tried and acquitted after protracted proceedings and the hearing of hundreds of witnesses on the ground that the killing was in the line of their official duty to uphold laws and preserve public order in the state. A representative of the department of justice attended the trials and reported its course fully. With all the facts in its possession, this government expects to reach a harmonious understanding on the subject with that of Austro-Hungary, notwithstanding the renewed claim of the latter after learning the result of the trial for indemnity for its injured subjects.

BRUSSELS EXPOSITION.

Despite the brief time allotted for preparation, the exhibits of this country at the Universal Exposition at Brussels in 1897 enjoyed the singular distinction of a larger proportion of awards, having regard to the number and classes of articles entered, than those of other countries. The worth of such a result in making known our national capacity to supply the world's markets is obvious.

Exhibitions of this international character are becoming more frequent as the exchanges of commercial countries grow more intimate and varied. Hardly a year passes that this government is not invited to national participation at some important foreign center, but often on too short notice to permit of recourse to Congress for the power and means to do so.

My predecessors have suggested the advisability of providing by a general enactment a standing appropriation for accepting such invitations, and for representation of this country by a commission. This plan has my cordial approval.

I trust the Belgian restriction on the importations of cattle from the United States originally adopted as a sanitary precaution, will at an early date, be modified as to their present and future of hardship and discrimination, so as to admit live cattle under due regulation of their slaughter after landing. I am hopeful, too, of a favorable condition in the Belgian treatment of our preserved and salted meats. The growth of direct trade between the two countries not alone for Belgian consumption and Belgian products, but by way of transit from and to other continental states, has been both encouraging and beneficial. No effort will be spared to enlarge its advantages by seeking the removal of needless impediment and by arrangements for increased commercial changes.

CENTRAL AMERICAN RUPTURE.

The year's events in Central America deserve more than passing mention. A menacing rupture between Costa Rica and Nicaragua was happily composed by the signature of a convention between the parties, with the concurrence of the Guatemalan representative as a mediator, the act being negotiated and signed on board the United States steamer *Alert*, then lying in Central American waters. It is believed that the good offices of our en-

voy and the commander of that vessel contributed to that gratifying outcome.

In my last message the situation was presented with respect to the diplomatic representation of this government in Central America, created by the association of Nicaragua, Honduras and Salvador under the title of the Greater Republic of Central America and the delegation of their international functions to the diet thereof. While the representative character of the diet was recognized by my predecessor and has been confirmed during my administration by receiving its accredited envoy and granted exequators to consuls coming under its authority, that recognition was qualified by the distinct understanding that the responsibility of each of the component sovereign republics toward the United States are made wholly unaffected.

This proviso was needful, inasmuch as the compact of the three republics was at the outset an association whereby certain representative functions were delegated to a tripartite commission, rather than a federation possessing centralized powers of government and the administration. In this view of this the relation of the United States to the several republics, a change in the representation of this country in Central America was neither recommended by the executive or initiated by Congress, thus leaving one of our envoys accredited as heretofore separately to two states of the Greater Republic Nicaragua and Salvador, and to a third state, Costa Rica, which was not a party to the compact, while our other envoy was similarly accredited to the union stated as Honduras and a non-union stated as Guatemala. The result has been that the one has presented credentials only to the president of Costa Rica, the other having been received only by the government of Guatemala.

UNITED STATES JUNIOR.

Subsequently, the three associated republics entered into negotiations for making the steps forecast in the original compact. A convention of their delegates framed for them a federal constitution, under the name of the United States of Central America and providing for a Central Federal government and legislature. Upon ratification by constituent states, the first of November last, was fixed for the new system to go into operation. Within a few weeks thereafter, the plan was severely tested by revolutionary movements arising, with a consequent demand for unity of action on the part of the military power of the federal states to suppress them. Under this strain the union seems to have been weakened through the withdrawal of its more important members. This government was not officially advised of the installation of the federation and has maintained an attitude of friendly expectancy, while in no wise relinquishing the position held from the outset that the responsibilities of the several states toward us remained unaltered by their tentative relations among themselves.

CANAL COMMISSION.

The Nicaragua canal commission, under the championship of Rear Admiral John G. Walker, appointed July 24, 1897, under the authority of a provision in the sundry civil act of June 4, of that year, has nearly completed its labors and the results of its exhaustive inquiry into the proper route, the feasibility and the cost of construction of an inter-oceanic canal by a Nicaraguan route, will be laid before you. In the performance of its work the commission received all possible courtesy and assistance from the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, which thus testified their appreciation of the importance of giving a speedy and prac-

tical outcome to the project that has for so many years engrossed the attention of the respective countries.

At the scope of recent inquiry embraced the whole subject with the aim of making plans and surveys for a canal by the most convenient route, it necessarily included a review of the results of previous surveys and plans, and in particular those adopted by the Maritime Canal company under its existing concessions from Nicaragua and Costa Rica, so that to this extent these grants necessarily held an essential part in the deliberations and conclusions of the canal commission as they have held and must needs hold in the discussion of the matter by Congress. Under these circumstances, and in view of overtures made to the governments of Nicaragua and Costa Rica by other parties for a new canal concession predicated on the assumed approaching lapse of the contracts of the Maritime Canal company with those states, I have not hesitated to express my convictions that considerations of expediency and international policy, as between the several governments interested in the construction and control of an inter-oceanic canal by this route, require the maintenance of the status quo, until the canal commission shall have reported and the United States Congress shall have had the opportunity to pass finally upon the whole matter during the present session without prejudice by reason of any change in the existing conditions.

Nevertheless, it appears that the government of Nicaragua, as one of its last sovereign acts before merging its powers in those of the newly formed United States of Central America, has granted an optional concession to another association to become effective on the expiration of the present grant. It does not appear what surveys have been made or what route is proposed under this contingent granted so that an examination of the feasibility of its plans is necessarily not embraced in the report of the canal commission. All these circumstances suggest the urgency of some definite action by the Congress at this session if the labors of the past are to be utilized and the linking of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans by a practical water way is to be realized.

WATERWAY INDISPENSIBLE.

That the construction of such a maritime highway is now more than ever indispensable to that intimate and ready inter-communication between our eastern and western seaboard demanded by the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands and the prospective expansion of our influence and commerce to the Pacific, and that our national policy now more imperatively than ever calls for its control by this government, are propositions which I doubt not the Congress will duly appreciate and wisely act upon.

A convention providing for the revival of the late United States and Chilean claims commission and the consideration of claims which were duly presented to the late commission but not considered because of the expiration of the time limited for the duration of the commission, was signed May 24th, 1897, and has remained unacted upon by the Senate. The terms therein fixed for effecting the exchange of ratifications having elapsed, the convention falls, unless the time be extended by amendment, which I am endeavoring to bring about, with the friendly concurrence of the Chilean government.

IN THE FAR EAST.

The United States has not been an indifferent spectator of the extraordinary events transpiring in the Chinese empire, whereby portions of its maritime provinces are passing under the control of various European powers;