

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America:

An appalling calamity has befallen the American people since their chosen representatives last met in the halls where you are now assembled. We might else recall with unalloyed content the marked prosperity with which, throughout the year, the nation has been blessed. Its harvests have been plentiful, its varied industries have thriven, the health of its people have been preserved and it has maintained with foreign governments the undisturbed relations of amity and peace. For these manifestations of His favor we owe to Him who holds our destiny in His hands the tribute of our grateful devotion. To that mysterious exercise of will which has taken from us the loved and illustrious citizen who was but lately at the head of the nation we bow in sorrow and submission. The memory of his exalted character, of his noble achievement and of his patriotic life, will be treasured for ever as a sacred possession of the whole people. The announcement of his death drew from foreign governments and peoples tributes of sympathy and sorrow which history will record as a signal token of the friendship of nations and the federation of mankind. The feeling of goodwill between our own government and that of Great Britain was never more marked than at present. In recognition of this pleasing fact I directed, on the occasion of the late centennial celebration at Yorktown, that a salute be given to the British flag.

FOREIGN RELATIONS.

Save to the correspondence to which I shall hereafter refer, in relation to the proposed canal across the Isthmus of Panama, little has occurred worth mention in our diplomatic relations with other countries. Early in the year the *Fortune* Bay claims were satisfactorily settled by the British government paying in the sum of £15,000, most of which has already been distributed as by the terms of the settlement, including compensation for injuries suffered by our fishermen at Ospee Bay. There has been retained from the gross award a sum which is deemed adequate for these claims.

The participation of Americans in the Exhibitions at Melbourne and Sydney will be approvingly mentioned in the reports of the exhibitors soon to be presented to Congress; they will disclose the readiness of our countrymen to make successful competition and enter new fields of enterprise. Negotiations for an International Copyright Convention are in hopeful progress. The surrender of Sitting Bull and his force upon the Canadian frontier has allayed all apprehensions, although bodies of hostile Indians still cross the border in quest of sustenance. Upon this subject a correspondence has been opened which promises an adequate understanding. Our troops have orders to avoid meanwhile all communications with alien Indians.

The presence at the Yorktown celebration of representatives of the French Republic and descendants of La Fayette and his gallant compatriots who were our allies in the Revolution, has served to strengthen the spirit of goodwill which has always existed between the two nations.

You will be furnished with the proceedings of the bi-metallic conference held during the summer at Paris. No accord was reached, but a valuable interchange of views was had and the conference will next year be renewed.

At the electrical exhibition and congress also held at Paris, this country was creditably represented by eminent specialists who, in the absence of an appropriation, generously lent their aid at the instance of the State Department. While our exhibitions in this almost distinctive American field of achievements have won several awards, I recommend that Congress provide for the repayment for the personal expenditures incurred in the public interest by the honorary commissioners and delegates.

No new inquiries respecting the status of our naturalized citizens in Germany have arisen during the year, and the grounds of complaint, especially in Alsace and Lorraine, have practically ceased, through the liberal action of the imperial

government in accepting our often expressed views on the subject. The application of the treaty of 1868 to the lately acquired Rhenish provinces last received, verifies our position, and a lasting agreement on this point is confidently expected. The participation of the descendants of Baron Von Steuben in the Yorktown festivities, and their subsequent reception by their American kinsmen strikingly evinced the ties of good will which unite the German people and our own.

Spain has been friendly. An agreement concluded in February last fixes a term for the labors of the Spanish and American claims commission. The Spanish Government has been requested to pay the late awards of the commission, and will, it is believed, accede to the request as promptly and courteously as on former occasions. By recent legislation, onerous fines have been imposed upon American shipping in Spanish and colonial ports for slight irregularities in manifests. There is one case of hardship that is specially worthy of attention. The bark *Mason*, bound for Japan, entered Manila in distress and is there sought to be confiscated under the Spanish revenue laws for an alleged shortage in her transhipped cargo. Though efforts for her relief have thus far proved unavailing, it is expected that the whole matter will be adjusted in a friendly spirit.

The Senate resolutions of condolence on the assassination of the Czar Alexander II. were appropriately communicated to the Russian government, which in turn has expressed its sympathy in our late national bereavement. It is desirable that our cordial relations with Russia should be strengthened by proper protection, in order to extend to peaceable Americans who visit that empire, the consideration which is due to them as citizens of a friendly state. This is especially needful with respect to American Israelites, whose classification with the native Hebrews has evoked energetic remonstrances from this government.

A consular agreement with Italy has been sanctioned and proclaimed which puts at rest the conflict of jurisdiction in the court of crimes on ship-board. Several important international conferences have been held in Italy during the year. At the Geographical Congress of Venice, the annual congress of Milan and the Nice Congress of Turin, this country was represented by delegates from branches of the public service or private citizens duly accredited in an honorary capacity. It is hoped that Congress will give such prominence to the result of their deliberations as they may seem to deserve.

The abolition of all discrimination in duties against the colonial productions of the Dutch, especially such as are imposed by Holland, has been already considered by Congress and I request that at the present session, the matter may be favorably concluded.

The insecurity of life and property in many parts of Turkey has given rise to correspondence with the Porte, looking particularly to the better protection of American missionaries in that empire. The condemned murderer of the eminent missionary, Dr. Justin W. Parsons, has not yet been executed, although this government has repeatedly demanded that exemplary justice be done.

The Swiss government has solicited the good offices of our diplomatic and consular agents for the protection of its citizens in countries where its nation is not represented. This request has, within proper limits been granted and our agents in Switzerland have been instructed to protest against the conduct of the authorities of certain cantons in regard to their position in sending emigrants to this country who are guilty of crimes, and other objectionable persons; several of such persons, through the co-operation of the commissioners of emigration at New York, have been sent back by the steamers which brought them. A continuance of this course may prove a more effectual remedy than diplomatic remonstrance.

Treaties of commerce and navigation, and for the regulation of consular privileges have been concluded with Roumania and Serbia since their admission into the family of European States.

MEXICO.

As is natural with contiguous states having like institutions, and like aims of advancement and development, the friendship of the United States and Mexico, has been

constantly maintained, and this government has lost no occasion of encouraging the Mexican government to a beneficial realization of the mutual advantages which will result from more intimate commercial intercourse, and from the opening of the rich interior of Mexico to railway enterprise.

I deem it important that means be provided to restrain the lawlessness unfortunately so common on the frontier, and to suppress the forays of the reservation Indians on the other side of the Rio Grande.

CENTRAL AMERICA.

The neighboring States of Central America have preserved internal peace and their outward relations toward us have been those of friendship. There are encouraging signs of their growing disposition to subordinate their local interests to those which are common to them by reason of their geographical relations. The boundary dispute between Guatemala and Mexico has afforded this government an opportunity to exercise its good offices for preventing a rupture between these States, and for procuring a peaceful solution of the question. I cherish a strong hope that in view of our relations of amity with both countries our friendly connections will continue.

The Costa Rican Government lately formed an engagement with Colombia for settling by arbitration the difficulties between their countries, providing that the selecting of the arbitrants should be offered successively to the King of the Belgians, the King of Spain and the President of the Argentine Confederation. The King of the Belgians has declined to act, but I am not as yet advised of the action of the King of Spain. As we have certain interests in the disputed territory which are protected by our treaty engagements with one of the parties, it is important that the arbitration should not, without our consent, affect our rights, and this government has accordingly thought proper to make its views known to the parties to the agreement and to intimate to them and to the Belgian government that the questions growing out of the proposed interoceanic water way across the Isthmus of Panama, are of grave national importance.

This government has not been unmindful of the solemn obligations imposed upon it by its compact of 1846 with Colombia, as the independent and sovereign mistress of the territory crossed by the canal, and has sought to render them effective by fresh engagements with the Colombian Republic, looking to their practical execution. The negotiations to this end when they had reached what appeared to be a mutually satisfactory solution here, were met in Colombia by a disavowal of the powers which its envoy had assumed, and by a proposal for renewed negotiations on a fortified basis. Meanwhile, this government learned that Colombia had proposed to the European powers to join in a guarantee of the neutrality of the proposed Panama canal, a guarantee which would be in direct contravention of our obligations as the sole guarantee of the integrity of Colombian territory, and of the neutrality of the canal itself. My lamented predecessor felt it his duty to place before the European powers the reasons which made the prior guarantee of the United States indispensable, and for which the interjection of any foreign guarantee might be regarded as a superfluous and unfriendly act.

Foreseeing the probable reliance of the British Government on the provisions of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty of 1850, as awarding room for a share in the guarantees which the United States covenanted with Colombia four years before, I have not hesitated to supplement the action of my predecessor by proposing to Her Majesty's government the modification of that instrument and the abrogation of such clauses thereof as do not comport with the obligations of the United States toward Colombia or with the vital needs of the two friendly parties to the compact.

THE SOUTH AMERICAN REPUBLICS.

This government sees with great concern the continuance of the hostile relations between Chili, Bolivia and Peru. An early peace between these republics is much to be desired, not only that they may themselves be spared further misery and bloodshed, but because their continual antagonism threatens consequences which are in my judgment dangerous to the interests of republican government on this continent and calculated to destroy the best

elements of our own free and powerful civilization. As in the present excited condition of popular feeling in these countries there has been serious misapprehension of the position of the United States, and as separate diplomatic intercourse with each through independent ministers is sometimes subject, owing to the want of prompt reciprocal communication, to temporary misunderstanding, I have deemed it judicious at the present time to send a special envoy accredited to all and each of them, furnished with general instructions, which will, I trust, enable him to bring these powers into friendly relations.

VENEZUELA.

The government of Venezuela maintains its attitude of warm friendship and continues with great regularity its payment of the monthly quota of the diplomatic debt. Without suggesting the direction in which Congress should act, I ask attention to the pending question affecting the distribution of the sums thus far received. The relations between Venezuela and France, growing out of the same debt have been for some time past in an unsatisfactory state, and this government, as the neighbor and one of the largest of the creditors of Venezuela, has interposed itself with the French government with the view of producing a friendly and honorable adjustment.

BRAZIL.

I regret that the commercial interests between the United States and Brazil from which great advantages were hoped a year ago, have suffered from the withdrawal of the American lines of communication between Brazilian ports and our own. Through the efforts of our minister resident at Buenos Ayres, and the United States Minister at San Diego, amity has been concluded between the Argentine Republic and Chili, disposing of the long pending Patagonian boundary question. It is a matter of congratulation that there has been offered the opportunity of successfully exerting a good influence for the prevention of disagreements between the republics of the American continent.

CHINA.

I am glad to inform you that the treaties lately negotiated with China have been duly ratified on both sides and the exchange made at Peking. Legislation is necessary to carry its provisions into effect. The prompt and friendly spirit with which the Chinese government, at the request of the United States, conceded the modification of existing treaties, should secure careful regard for the interest and susceptibilities of that government in the encroachment of any laws relating to Chinese emigration.

These classes of the treaties which forbid the participation of citizens or vessels of the United States in the opium trade, will doubtless receive your approval, and they will attest the sincere interest which our people and governments take in the commendable efforts of the Chinese government to put a stop to this demoralizing and destructive traffic. In relation both to China and Japan some changes are desirable in our present system of consular jurisdiction. I hope at some future time to lay before you a scheme for its improvement in the entire East.

JAPAN.

The intimacy between our country and Japan, the most advanced of the eastern nations, continue to be cordial. I am advised that the Emperor contemplates the establishment of a constitutional government and that he has already summoned a parliamentary congress for the purpose of effecting the change. Such a remarkable step towards complete assimilation with the western system cannot fail to bring Japan into closer and more beneficial relationship with ourselves as the chief pacific power.

A question has arisen in relation to the exercise in that country of the judicial functions conferred upon our ministers and consuls. The indictment, trial, and conviction in the Consular Court at Yokohama, of John Ross, a merchant seaman on board an American vessel, have made it necessary for the government to institute a careful examination into the nature and methods of this jurisdiction. It appeared that Ross was regularly shipped under the flag of the United States, but was by birth a British subject. My predecessor felt it his duty to maintain the position that,

during his service as a regularly shipped seaman on board an American merchant vessel, Ross was subject to the laws of that service and to the jurisdiction of the United States consular authorities.

I renew the recommendation which has heretofore been urged by the executive upon the attention of Congress, that after the reduction of such an amount as may be found due to American citizens, the balance of the indemnity funds heretofore obtained from China and Japan and which are now in the hands of the State Department, be returned to the governments of those countries.

SANDWICH ISLANDS.

The King of the Hawaii, in the course of his homeward return, after a journey around the world, has lately visited this country. While our relations with that kingdom are friendly, this government has viewed with concern the efforts to seek the replenishment of the diminishing population of the Islands from outward sources, to a degree which may impair their native sovereignty and independence, in which the United States was among the first to testify a lively interest.

EUROPEAN POWERS.

Relations of unimpeached amity have been maintained throughout the year with the respective governments of Austria, Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, Hayti, Paraguay and Uruguay, Portugal, and Sweden and Norway, and this may also be said of Greece and Ecuador, although our relations with these States have for some years been severed by the withdrawal of appropriations for diplomatic representatives at Athens and Quito. It seems expedient to restore those missions even on a reduced scale, and I decidedly recommend such a course with respect to Ecuador, which is likely, within the near future, to play an important part among the nations of the South Pacific.

At the last extra session, the session called for the text of the Geneva convention for the relief of the wounded in the war. I trust this action foreshadows such interest in the subject as will result in the adhesion of the United States to that humane and commendable arrangement.

INTERNATIONAL CODE.

I call your attention to the propriety of adopting a new code of international rules for the prevention of collisions on the high seas and of confirming the domestic legislation of the United States thereto, so that no confusion may arise from the application of conflicting signals of vessels of different nationalities meeting in tidal waters. These international rules differ but slightly from our own. They have been adopted by the Navy Department for the government of the war ships of the United States on the high seas and in foreign waters, and through the action of the State Department, in disseminating the rules and acquainting the shipmasters, with the option of conforming to them without the jurisdictional waters of the United States. They are now very generally known and obeyed.

The State Department still continues to publish to the country the trade and manufacturing reports received from its officers abroad. The success of this course warrants its continuance and such appropriations as may be required to meet the rapidly increasing demand for those publications. With special reference to the Atlanta Cotton Exposition, the October number of the reports was devoted to a valuable collection of papers on the cotton goods trade of the world.

SANITARY CONFERENCE.

The international sanitary conference, for which in 1879, Congress made provision, assembled in this city early in January last, and its sessions were prolonged until March. Although it reached no specific conclusion affecting the future action of the participant powers, the interchange of views proved to be most valuable. The full protocols of the sessions have been already presented to the State. As pertinent to the general subject, I call your attention to the operation of the National Board of Health, established by act of Congress approved March 3, 1879. Its sphere of duty was enlarged by the acts of June 2 d of the same year. By the last named act the board was required to institute such measures as might be deemed