

THE United States Congress seems, on the whole, to be in a progressive mood this session. It has already passed two measures looking to international action of great importance. The first is the McCreary bill, which has now been signed by the President. This is a bill providing for the calling of a Pan-American Congress at Washington. Cuba, Brazil, and all the Spanish-speaking countries of Central and South America, are to be invited to send delegates. The consent of these Governments is a foregone conclusion, as they have frequently of late years expressed their willingness to meet in such a convention. Such matters as a uniform system of weights and measures, uniformity of coinage, treaties of reciprocity, etc., will be brought before the Convention. Whether any means of surmounting the very serious difficulties in the way of harmonizing the laws and policy of the different States in regard to such matters can be devised and agreed on remains to be seen. Probably the chances are against the success of a first effort. But the principle of inter-continental conference once established will be a great gain, and a free and friendly interchange of views can hardly fail of good results in the end.

THE other measure referred to is of world-wide interest. Prompted, perhaps, by the visit last year of the deputation from the peace-loving members of the British Parliament, the United States Senate has passed, without discussion or opposition, a resolution authorizing the President to enter into negotiations with all foreign powers for the settlement of all international disputes by arbitration. The result aimed at by such action is so large and grand that we may well forbear to cavil, or to point out how inconsistent it may seem with the Senate's own attitude towards Canada in regard to the fishery dispute. That dispute, like many others of much more dangerous import, will dwindle and die the moment the great nations can be got to consent to this most simple, sensible, and truly Christian mode of adjusting their quarrels. It may be said by belligerent Europeans that it is very easy for the United States, in her isolation from warlike neighbours and her freedom from foreign complications, to make such a proposal. But, on the other hand, it should not be forgotten that this very aloofness and independence put it in the power of the Great American Republic to take the initiative, which would make too large demands upon the moral courage of any of the Great Powers of Europe. Her motives are hardly open to suspicion. She has no threatening enemy on her borders. Her peace is not menaced by powerful neighbours armed to the teeth. She will deserve immortal honour if she can but induce the great warlike nations of Christendom to listen to and discuss her proposal, a proposal which, if our civilization is not doomed to fail utterly, must, sooner or later, be adopted by all enlightened nations. To bring such a scheme within the area of serious international discussion, is to bring its adoption perceptibly nearer.

THE Houses of Congress have under consideration yet another measure of great international importance. The two Houses have, it is understood, agreed on the terms of an Act authorizing and requesting the President to invite the Government of each marine nation to send delegates to a Marine Conference, to assemble in Washington on October 1st of the current year, or at such other time and place as he may designate. The President is also empowered to appoint delegates to represent the United States at such Conference. The bill provides that the object of the Conference shall be "To revise and amend the 'rule of the road at sea,' and the 'international code of flag and night signals'; to adopt a uniform system of marine signals, or other means of plainly indicating the direction in which vessels are moving in fog, mist, falling snow, and thick weather, and at night; to compare and discuss the various systems employed for the saving of life and property from shipwreck; for reporting, marking and removing dangerous wrecks or obstructions to navigation; for designating vessels; for conveying to mariners and persons interested in shipping warnings of approaching storms, of dangers to navigation, of changes in lights, buoys, and other day and night marks, and other important information, and to formulate and submit for ratification to the Governments of all maritime nations proper international regulations for the prevention of collisions and other avoidable disasters." There seems no reason to doubt that the leading marine nations will readily accept the invitation and send their delegates. The object is in every way praiseworthy, and there is need of clearer rules and a better understanding of them amongst seamen of all classes and nations. No doubt a thoroughly improved and perfected code of laws and signals would do much to prevent the terrible disasters now too frequent on the watery highways.

AN important innovation is about to be made by the State of New York in the mode of inflicting capital punishment. In accordance with the report of a committee appointed to investigate the subject, the Legislature has passed an Act providing that after January 1st, 1889, execution by hanging shall be abolished, and execution by electricity substituted throughout the State. It is not a little surprising to find many men of intelligence opposed to the new system on the ground, apparently, that it will make the infliction of the death penalty more nearly painless than the old method. Even clergymen have been found opposing the change, as too merciful to the culprit. The idea that there should be some correspondence between the pains inflicted on the culprit and those he caused his victim to suffer seems to linger long in many not otherwise unenlightened minds. The wonder is that every one does not see at a glance that such an argument proves too much, and can find no logical halting-place short of such horrible tortures as used to be inflicted by the rack, the wheel, drawing and quartering, fire, etc. But, abandoning the idea of torture, from which humanity revolts, the alternative view clearly is that the removal of the convict is simply a measure for the warning of others and the safety of society, and that it should be accomplished in a way as little barbarous and revolting as possible, with a view to the best effect upon the public mind. A most wise provision of the New York statute is that not the exact day or hour, but only the week of execution shall be fixed by the court; that only a few officials, clergymen, physicians and citizens shall be permitted to be present, and that it shall be a misdemeanor for any newspaper to publish any account of the details of any such execution, beyond the statement of the fact that such convict was on the day in question duly executed according to law, at the prison.

THE platform adopted by the Republican Convention will strike most impartial readers as rather a political manifesto than a statesmanlike pronouncement. Several of its clauses are obviously appeals to sectional or national prejudices. The Irish vote, the Negro vote, the Maine Fishermen's vote, the Anti-Chinese vote, the Anglo-phobist vote, each in its turn is fished for, neither delicately nor dexterously. The so-called "Monroe Doctrine" is twice dragged into the text, with a violence so evident as must provoke a smile to the lips of even its most pronounced adherent. The feeble and somewhat ambiguous denunciation of "trusts" will hardly strike terror into the hearts of the monopolists and combiners. The chief strength of the document is, of course, in the paragraphs in which the Party is made to declare its uncompromising adhesion to the system of Protection. Even this very strong ground of appeal to the interests and convictions of a large and powerful section of the American people is not so effectively used as one would have expected. The first of the two paragraphs in which the appeal is embodied is filled with broad and rather vague declarations, some of which it might not be easy to prove. Why it should be called distinctively "the American system," or when "its abandonment" in America took place, or was followed by "general disaster," is not made clear, nor does the rather vapid denunciation of the Mills Bill add much to the force of the argument, if such it is. In regard to the second paragraph it is hard to avoid the feeling that Mr. Blaine's ill-considered rejoinder from Europe to the President's Message has led his party into an untenable position. It cannot be that the proposal to reduce the surplus revenue by the abolition, if need be, of the whole internal taxes on tobacco and whiskey, can commend itself to the sober judgment of the members of the Republican Party throughout the United States. On the whole, whatever views one may hold in regard to the great tariff question, which is the leading issue in the campaign, he can scarcely avoid the feeling that in point of terseness, directness and vigour, the Democratic platform is the more skilfully constructed of the two, and bears more clearly the impress of resolute leaders, confident of their power to win.

IT must be confessed that so far neither the manifestoes issued by the young Emperor of Germany, nor certain alleged incidents in connection with the beginning of his reign, have been reassuring. It is easy, of course, to attach too much importance to the wording of documents written under circumstances so trying, as well as to supposed manifestations of character in little things which in a less fierce light would have passed unnoticed. The widespread uneasiness in Europe may, no doubt, be due in a considerable measure to unfavourable prepossessions, under the influence of which it is easy to find or fancy meanings and indications the existence of which would not, under these circumstances, have been suspected. The proclamations, themselves, whether framed by his own hand or that of another, are not remarkable for evidences of literary skill or statesmanlike ability.