

CURRENT TOPICS

FORMER PRESIDENT Roosevelt wrote a letter to one Tony Gavin, a former Rough Rider, giving his opinion about the relative merits of the contestants in the coming Jeffries-Johnson prize fight. Upon reading Mr. Roosevelt's letter the negro prize fighter, Johnson, sent to a New York newspaper this dispatch: "Boston, Mass., January 16. — Ex-President Roosevelt ought to be a good authority. He has been boxing himself, and should know the merits of both men, and I think he should make a good referee, being our nation's chief leader, and a great leader was he. I am satisfied, if the club would choose him as referee, it would satisfy me to a queen's taste. He is cool and collected, and no one can rattle him and get his goat like they would a lot of fellows who have their names down as referees. Your champion, Jack Johnson."

AN ASSOCIATED Press dispatch from Washington says: "Specific charges of extravagance and favoritism in the land office and misuse of appropriations were made by Representative Hitchcock of Nebraska before the house committee on expenditures in the interior department. As a result of the testimony given by Mr. Hitchcock, the committee will at once begin an investigation independent of that to be conducted by a joint committee of congress. Witnesses will be summoned from the interior department and if they fail to respond the committee will ask the house for authority to compel the attendance of witnesses and place them under oath. Mr. Hitchcock's charges created a sensation at the department of the interior. His charges were so specific that a conference of bureau chiefs was hurriedly summoned in an effort to find out who had been supplying Mr. Hitchcock with information. The most important allegation of Mr. Hitchcock is that funds of the interior department were improperly used in paying private traveling expenses of Secretary Ballinger's nephew. The secretary and other officials of the interior department will be subpoenaed before the house committee on expenditures, to which Mr. Hitchcock's charges were addressed."

WRITING ON "An Historic Fact," Henry Watterson, in a Louisville Courier-Journal editorial, says: "A writer in the New York Evening Post, who signs himself 'Northern Unionist,' offers this to the groups of camp-followers and coffee-coolers, who have lately heard of the war of sections and are beginning to get mad enough almost to fight: 'It strikes my commonplace imagination that an effectual test of the propriety of a statue of General Lee at the capitol is to be found in the question, what would Grant and Sherman have thought of it?' and adds, 'Could any modern G. A. R. commander answer that frankly and honestly and leave himself enough ammunition to damage the plan?' In 1877, when the Hayes-Tilden contest was decided in favor of Hayes, General W. T. Sherman was so insistent that General Joseph E. Johnston should be secretary of war in the new cabinet, that Mr. Hayes consented. It was proposed to the nearest friends of General Johnston, who stated that if the offer were made General Johnston would decline it. General Sherman expressed himself as greatly disappointed. Subsequently, Judge Key, a confederate soldier and an original secessionist, was made postmaster general. To Grant and Sherman the war ended in 1865; to camp-followers and coffee-coolers, it would never end."

THE WASHINGTON correspondent for the Brooklyn Eagle puts the responsibility for the "no patronage order" upon Adam Bede, formerly a member of congress from Minnesota. This correspondent says: "A story is going the rounds here that the administration was induced to withhold patronage from the insurgents as a result of the activity of a former funny-man-of-the-house. Adam Bede is said to be the man who induced the president to push the insurgents away from the pie-counter. Bede had the reputation of being the best story teller in congress. In fact, he was known throughout the country as an entertainer, and he capitalized

this reputation by earning an honest dollar or two on the lecture platform. This fact was used against him in the fight for renomination. He was beaten by Clarence B. Miller, who charged that Bede never got anything in the house but a laugh, and that the amusement he afforded to his associates was of no practical benefit to the voters in the Eighth Minnesota district. Miller was elected and at once lined up with the insurgents. Adam Bede dropped into Washington a couple of weeks ago and told his friend, Frank Hitchcock, that republican members of congress who were trying to break up party solidarity ought not to get any federal plums. Hitchcock took the tip and the job was done. Miller was the man who gave out the news that Hitchcock had told him that the republican insurgents would get no federal patronage."

SPAKING OF the custom of tributes in congress to members who have passed away, Senator Dolliver of Iowa told the Washington correspondent for the Lincoln (Neb.) Journal this story: "I recollect the most remarkable experience I ever had making a speech. A statue was to be dedicated to the first president of the United States. Know his name? No, not George Washington. He wasn't the first president of the United States. The first man who ever held the title was named Hanson; first president of the first congress of the confederation. His title was president of the United States. I delved around in the books and worked up some of what I thought were mighty interesting historical data. On the appointed day I marched into the senate chamber, and there were eleven pages and three senators there. Two of the senators, like myself, were to make speeches. The other was Senator Hoar. The two other senators made their speeches. Being seniors, they came ahead of me. Each, when he was finished, promptly walked out. When I came on my audience consisted of Senator Hoar, the pages, the presiding officer, and a fair gallery. I got up and started in very much discouraged. Senator Hoar was deeply interested. He followed me closely. Presently he moved up closer to me. Then he got paper and pencil and began taking notes. He proved as good an audience as a full senate, and I turned myself loose to entertain him. He became so interested that he would occasionally drop remarks such as 'remarkable really; where did you get that,' and the like. I thought I was making a great hit with the veteran, and was immensely pleased. When I got done I thanked him for his attention and interest, and he replied: 'Not at all, senator; I was much interested because I have to make a historical speech myself shortly, and I wanted to get notes on those researches of yours.'" "And," concluded Senator Dolliver, "the senator made a speech a short time afterward and sent me a report of it, showing how he had utilized the studies I had worked into my observations."

CONCERNING reforms in the Asiatic vilayets of Turkey, H. C. Woods, writing in the Westminster Gazette, says that marked improvement has been made and adds: "Whilst truthfully stating that equality between Moslems and Christians has not been, and can not be, established, at least for many years, practically everybody agrees that the position and existence of the Christian in Asia Minor is considerably better under the Young Turks than it ever was in the old days of Abdul Hamid. Amongst many other things permission is now liberally granted to travel, instruction in all subjects is freely permitted in schools, and papers, letters, and books are safely delivered to their addresses. Although I have received letters from Armenians stating that they were afraid to call upon me at my hotel, I can hardly believe that these fears were founded upon any reasonable grounds. After studying the various questions at the different centers which I have visited, it appears to me on the whole that, relatively speaking, more reforms have been effected by the Young Turks in the parts of Asia Minor which I have visited than in European Turkey. The difficulty of providing enough experienced and at the same time honest officials is, of

course, enormous. This obstacle can only be overcome by the lapse of time and by gradually filling up the various government posts with suitable men, regardless of their race or religion."

EXAGGERATION in speech is condemned in an editorial printed in the Washington (D. C.) Herald. It says: "The language we possess may not be the most euphonious, nor the most expressive, nor the easiest to learn, but none of these shortcomings can excuse the general tenor of the present day. We fail to give thought to the simplest rules of conduct when we are talking about commonplace affairs. When we are thirsty, we are usually 'dying of thirst;' when we meet a friend, we are 'overjoyed to see you;' when the rain is falling, it is generally a 'terrible rain;' we are 'crazy to see a show;' we are often 'tickled to death;' we tell one who brings a message relieving our anxiety that 'you have saved my life.' * * * Melodrama of the lurid type is only picturing what we daily enact figuratively. The English language is an excellent vehicle for the transfer of thought, and its normal, natural use should suffice. But it is time to call a halt, or we will (shall) have killed many of the best words by giving them a meaning far different from that in the dictionary."

THE INDIANAPOLIS News takes exception to the Washington Herald's criticisms, saying: "Our language is indeed not the most euphonious, but it is the most expressive or the most forcible of modern speech, and the easiest to learn. As to giving words a different meaning from what they have in the dictionary, that depends on the dictionary. In other words, it is the natural process of language that words get different meanings with different generations. It is so with all languages that are alive. When a language is once dead, being no longer spoken, its words and forms become fixed, but as long as it is in use, succeeding generations give new meanings to words and add new words. They also change pronunciation. For a familiar example, there is Shakespeare's title, 'Much Ado About Nothing.' In his day and for long afterward pronunciation softened the 'th' sound, and that title was pronounced almost as if we should spell it, 'Much Ado About Noting.' 'Nothing' was thus intended by him to be a pun on the other word noting, and it will be noted how often the word 'noting' occurs in the play, especially in the first part and how it is really a play in which everybody is noting everybody else and how the process is often advised in the text. This is but a brief illustration. So we fear that our esteemed contemporary has discovered a mare's nest as to this. As to its criticism of exaggeration (of which it affords a fine example) there is much truth. We have not outgrown our period of bombast when we 'could lick all creation, yes siree.' Dickens told us wholesome truth about ourselves fifty years ago in his 'American Notes.' Instead of recognizing it we fairly screamed an angry and mortified denial which in itself ought to have told us the truth of the matter. It has told us since, and now, we think, we have in large degree outgrown the phase. Even in the south, where hyperbole was the every-day speech, there is a soberness of statement that few had fifty years ago. As to 'dying of thirst' and 'tickled to death,' they are, for the most part, not literal, but conventional—an example of new meanings given to words and phrases. 'Terrible rain' can hardly be cited as an example, for we do have terrible rains frequently. With us it 'never rains but it pours.' It has often been said that if Shakespeare had lived here instead of in England, he would never have compared mercy with the 'gentle rain that droppeth from the heavens.' We do not have that kind. Our rains are fierce as our sunshine is. So it seems to us that we can take heart of grace and feel that we are 'not half bad,' as our English cousins with their habit of understatement put it. We do still overstate on occasion, both in the newspapers and by the mouth of our Columbian orators; but our daily speech is growing sober—alas, we are also growing older, and as we do some of the exuberance of youth vanishes."