

CURRENT TOPICS

A READER OF THE New York Times who signs himself "A Foreigner" sends to that newspaper this interesting contribution to simplified spelling literature. "What is the correct pronunciation of the word 'says'?" In two private schools of the first rank in this city, my children have been corrected for not saying 'sez.' Is 'sez' an Americanism? I have never heard it used by any cultivated English speaker. If 'says' is correctly pronounced 'sez,' why do American authors spell the word 'sez' when they put it in the speech of uneducated persons, or use it in dialect stories?"

CONSIDERABLE FUN has been poked at President Roosevelt by republican leaders at Washington, because of what is called his "message habit." The Washington correspondent for the New York Evening Post says that Mr. Roosevelt has taken heed of this criticism and has concluded not so freely to communicate his views hereafter. This correspondent says that with the exception of the message on the navy bill and on the visit to Panama, all the messages that have gone to congress recently "were drawn from Mr. Roosevelt, either by direct order of congress or because of the importunities of members who succeeded in making the chief executive believe that there was real necessity for letter-writing, because a useful public end was to be served."

JAMES BRYCE, who is soon to become Great Britain's ambassador to this country, will be the first untitled diplomat to occupy that position. Mr. Bryce recently declined a peerage. He has been chief secretary for Ireland and a member of parliament for many years. He is an Irishman and prominently identified with the political history of that country. He will be warmly welcomed to the United States, where he is by no means a stranger, having often visited in this country. That he is acquainted with American conditions, political and social, is evidenced by his book, "The American Commonwealth," which long ago became a classic.

THE NEW YORK TIMES in its issue of December 22 printed a report of the proceedings of the committee of fifteen appointed at the last session of the legislature, to examine into the present New York state taxation laws. These extracts are taken from the Times report: "Several bills have been prepared for introduction, and the basic idea in each is a tax on incomes, graduated in such a way that the burden will fall heaviest on the individual with a large income derived from great wealth, either inherited or acquired, and lightest upon the wage earner. The general opinion among the committeemen when the present laws had been thoroughly examined was that it was hardly fair that the expenses of government should be borne equally by the poor man and the rich, according to the amount of real and personal property each held. The committee therefore, although composed mainly of republicans, adopted to a certain extent a Bryan idea in preparing its bills. It is believed that voluminous data in support of the new theory of taxation will be presented when the committee makes its report."

SUITABLE ARRANGEMENTS are being made to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of General Robert E. Lee at Lexington, Va., January 19. John A. McNeel, Rockbridge Baths, Va., writes: "The ceremonies will be under the auspices of the local chapters of the Mary Custis Lee Daughters of the Confederacy, the Frank Paxton Camp of the Sons of the Confederacy, the Lee-Jackson Camp of Confederate Veterans, and the authorities of Washington and Lee University, represented by its president, Dr. George H. Dinny. The address will be delivered in the Lee Memorial chapel, and the Hon. Charles Francis Adams of Boston, Mass., will be the orator of the occasion. The arrangement was consummated on the 11th of December at Lexington at a large and interesting meeting of the Lee-Jackson Camp of Veterans, at which meeting the Daughters and Sons of the Confed-

eracy, and the university authorities were represented. General Robert Edward Lee was born on the 19th day of January, 1807, in the county of Westmoreland, Va. Thomas Johnathan Jackson (better known as Stonewall) was born on the 21st day of January, 1824, in Lewis county, Va. (now West Virginia). The mortal remains of both these distinguished soldiers lie buried in Lexington; that of General Lee in the vault of the Lee Memorial chapel, and the recumbent statue of General Lee lies in state immediately over the vault in the rear of the auditorium. The remains of General Jackson are buried in the public cemetery, over which a magnificent bronze statue has been erected. Mr. Edward Valentine, of Richmond, Va., was the sculptor of both these pieces of art. Heretofore it has been the custom of the Lee-Jackson camp of Veterans to celebrate the 20th day of January as the birthday of these two distinguished men. There could have been no better selection in the United States of an orator for the occasion than Dr. Adams of Boston. In conclusion it may be a comfort to the 'old Confeds' who are scattered abroad to know that they were remembered and kindly spoken of at the meeting when the arrangements were being made to commemorate the one hundredth birth anniversary of their great leader."

SAMUEL GOMPERS charges that the petition in favor of ship subsidy and forwarded to congress has been forged. He particularizes that the name of the Marine Trades Council of the port of New York was attached to the petition without authority. Referring to Mr. Gompers' charges the New York Evening Post says that it "at least invites attention to the machinery by which the pro subsidy 'sentiment' is being worked up in this country." The Post adds: "The district attorney's office is investigating now the story of a man who says he received from one Alexander C. Smith a check for \$2,000, which he was to spend without an accounting, for sending copies of a set of resolutions and a request for their passage to some 14,000 local labor organizations, all this being done on imitated letter paper of the Marine Trades Council, and with the rubberstamp signature of its secretary. Our own Washington correspondent recently gave an account of some of the novel and audacious devices by which the subsidy grabbers were seeking to bring their cause into public notice. Whether or not any literary criminal act has been committed, the fact remains that the subsidy lobby, liberally supplied with funds, is making every effort to produce the semblance of a popular demand for the 'shipping bill.' Congress, we trust, will know how to take these 'demonstrations' for what they are worth."

THE LONDON Spectator says: "Radical politicians and radical newspapers are very much in error in thinking that they can frighten the conservative and moderate portion of the nation by threatening them with the abolition of the house of lords unless the peers say ditto to the house of commons over all the bills that are sent up to them. If those who represent 'left-center' opinion in England—and that opinion is, we believe, stronger today than it ever was—were thoroughly satisfied with the house of lords, and believed it to be an ideal chamber for check and revision and for securing wise second thoughts in regard to legislation, the threat of abolition might, no doubt, cause a certain amount of anxiety and alarm. Since, however, thoughtful men of moderate views are by no means satisfied that the country possesses a second house which can adequately perform the great functions of revision in the national legislature, all the 'tall talk' about the house of lords having to mend their ways if they do not desire to be blotted out of the constitution leaves them cold. Experience is showing us that we could hardly have a weaker or less efficient revising body than the house of lords, and that we might very easily have a much stronger one. It is perfectly certain that the country is not going to place the whole of the constitution, and the whole welfare of the empire, at the mercy of a single house elected for seven years, or to make it possible that our most fundamental laws and liberties shall be exposed to the

risks of a snap vote in the commons. We are not to be counted among those who regard the popular chamber with suspicion. Again, we do not believe that the country has lost its confidence in the house of commons, or that that assembly is, taken as a whole, worse than its predecessors. We are convinced, however, that the nation will never trust it, or any other institution, with absolutely uncontrolled and unlimited powers. It is certain that the people will insist upon some check on the house of commons in the shape of a revising chamber. But this granted, it also becomes certain that the reform of the house of lords, or its abolition and the substitution of another body in its place, must mean the creation of a stronger, not a weaker, upper house. In other words, those who desire an effective check upon the commons stand to win under any proposal for reforming or abolishing the house of lords. Therefore, as we have said, moderate men contemplate the threats against the lords not merely with equanimity, but even with a certain amount of satisfaction."

THIS LETTER FROM Erving Winslow, secretary of the Anti-Imperialist League, Boston, will serve as an answer to several queries: "We are not aware of any definite denial of the public reading of the Declaration of Independence in the Philippines. The sedition law of November 4, 1901, forbade any agitation of the question of independence while the disorders continued in the Philippine islands and it was assumed that this law prohibited the reading of the Declaration of Independence, a question which was mooted according to common rumor and the newspaper comments at the time. The sedition law, of course, was automatically repealed by the declaration of peace, July 4, 1902, and the Declaration of Independence was read on the last Fourth of July through the efforts of Dr. Doherty, the commissioner of the Philippine Progress society now in the Philippines."

THE AMERICAN government's income is described by the Baltimore Sun in this way: "The revenue of \$762,386,000 received by the government in the last fiscal year was \$65,285,000 more than the year before, the tariff tax and internal taxes having been immensely productive. A surplus of \$25,669,000, against a deficit of \$23,004,000 the year before, is the consequence. Expenditure was \$736,717,000, of which sum over \$369,000,000 was for the war and navy departments, including rivers and harbors and for pensions. The outgo was \$16,612,000 larger than in 1905. The tariff tax produced \$300,251,000; internal taxes, \$249,150,000. The customs receipts break the record, which was \$286,000,000 in 1903. All the figures reflect the activity of business in the past year."

REFERRING TO THE political campaign in the Transvaal, the Johannesburg correspondent for the Houston, Texas, Post says: "The contest is something more than a struggle over an industry. Getting down to bedrock it must, to a large extent, decide the place South Africa will take in the empire. Probably the Bond will win the next election at the Cape; certainly the Unie will dominate the Orange river colony; the odds are that Het Volk will hold the balance of power north of the Vaal. Thus right through the center of South Africa will be driven a wedge of Dutch governments, Dutch institutions, Dutch ideals. One of the most interesting undertakings of modern times is the harnessing of the Victoria Falls to supply electric power to the Rand and to the innumerable developments of industrial life in the Transvaal and Rhodesia. It is easily the largest single project of this character. The history of the enterprise is very simple. Each nationality has realized the need of South Africa for a cheap and abundant supply of power. Previously attention in Germany was only directed to a scheme for a coal power station on the Rand. Experts were early this year in Johannesburg arranging contracts on behalf of the proposed Victoria Falls Power company, and thither simultaneously came also, two engineers of the German Allgemeine Electricitats company to investigate the possi-