

A HUMBUGH SESSION.

LEGISLATURES are always frauds and delusions—particularly in Nebraska. And the present session, to speak plainly will probably be a greater humbug than any that have preceded it.

In the first place the republicans are overwhelmingly in the majority, and it is a noticeable and historic fact that when the republicans are in control indifference becomes a prominent legislative characteristic.

To much success is just as harmful to republicans as to democrats.

The present legislature is what the daily newspapers call a "representative body of men." It is composed, in large measure, of active, young or middle aged men, lawyers, farmers, merchants, politicians, etc. The majority of the republican members are actively identified with the party organization, and "the boys" are largely represented.

There is a deep undercurrent of sentiment that follows Pope's lines, "Whatever is, is right." There is no strong sentiment in favor of genuine reform. There is no evidence of a determined effort to restrict corporate oppression. There is no disposition to enforce a strict economy in legislative expenses and in general appropriations.

But there is no end of professions.

Members are making a great show of introducing bills which they never expect to have passed.

There are innumerable bills already introduced or to be introduced to regulate stock yards charges, to restrict telephone and telegraph companies and reduce the charges for service, to establish maximum railway rates for freight, to regulate street railway companies, etc., etc.

These measure are introduced seriously and in the early stages at least, are pushed forward with some degree of earnestness.

But there is no intention to enact any of these radical measures into laws.

The railroads and the telephone and telegraph companies and the stock yards company, and the rest of 'em are not going to be harmed any by this legislature, notwithstanding the fact that there may be a great deal of noise at intervals during the session.

What will the legislature do?

Beyond electing Mr. Thurston senator it will do very little.

It has already demonstrated its indifference to the public demand for economy by hiring scores of useless employes. It bids fair to be as extravagant in this respect as any of its predecessors. Many thousands of dollars will be literally thrown away during the session in carrying supernumeraries on the pay roll.

The legislature will waste a good deal of time, and at the eleventh hour may possibly do something practical in the way of affording relief to the drouth sufferers.

There will be no end of talk about irrigation, but few people expect to see anything of importance accomplished.

Several hundred laws will be passed—mostly amendments to existing laws; but to 99 citizens out of 100 they will have no application.

In the matter of appropriations the public may expect to hear a great deal said about economy, and when all is said and done the total amount of public money appropriated will undoubtedly exceed that of last session.

It is going to be a humbug session. If you don't believe it, observe the loud reform protestations, and then, at the end of the session, sum up what has been accomplished for the good of the state.

DAMROSGH'S NEW OPERA.

Last week in Carnegie hall, New York, excerpts were heard for the first time from Walter Damrosch's three act opera, "The Scarlet Letter." There was nothing to distract attention from the music, none of the charm of personality which surrounds a favorite artist in a sympathetic role, no ingenious or charming scenery, no interesting stage action. Yet the new work scored an undoubted success.

The poem has been written upon the subject of Hawthorne's Scarlet Letter by Mr. George Parsons Lathrop, the great novelist's son-in-law. Some slight changes have been effected in the story. Little Pearl is supposed to have died shortly after her birth, and in the last act, when the pastor falls down upon the scaffold, Hester Prynne drinks a vial of poison. These changes are manifest improvements from a dramatic point of view. The libretto is written

in plastic verse, that follows the changing situations and sentiments of the various characters with admirable freedom and ease. It is principally in rhyme, though the poet has used the utmost license in this respect—too much license, in fact, for the last line of the second quatrain in the following quotation from Hester's great scene grates harshly on the ear:

Oh! Father in heaven. If still to call Thee Father I dare,
Grant me to do Thy will, my burden is too hard to bear.
Unto my heart restore sweet faith again and last,
That humbly I once more may trust my soul to Thy care.

The work opens with a long chorus of Puritans. The populace are clamoring for the death of Hester Prynne, who is in the prison. The prison door opens. The soldiers form a line through the crowd and Hester appears, walks down the passage thus made for her and ascendst he pillory. In all essential features the ensuing scene follows the lines laid down in the novel and the curtain falls on the first act as Chillingworth, Hester's husband, discovers that her partner in guilt is Dimmesdale, through the anxiety the woman displays when the pastor faints.

The second act takes place in a forest near Hester's cottage. She sits beside a rivulet and sings a long song, in which she compares her own unrest to the never ceasing agitation of the brook and finally falls upon her knees in prayer. She is interrupted by a body of Puritans journeying farther inland and lightening the toilsome march with a madrigal. The scrap of melody accompanying the graceful couplets was refreshing in the arid wilderness of notes where it sprang up fresh and blooming as a revivifying shower after a sultry day.

In the third act the pastor falls dead after an address to the "people of New England." Hester drinks the poison Chillingworth had distilled and given to Arthur and which she had taken out of the pastor's hand, and then dies upon the body of her wretched lover.

Mr. Damrosch's music, making large allowances for the disadvantage under which its performance labored, impressed one as the work of a man whose training had been of the best. He writes for the orchestra with remarkable skill and ease even if there is nothing particularly, or strikingly original in the scoring. But the result is without a spark of life. It is a study in color, not a picture. There is a restless striving after dramatic effect that is absolutely fruitless, for there is not a touch of genuine passion in its composition. It is fluent enough, garrulous even, but it does not tell its story. Not that there were no good points in the work—on the contrary it was a happy thought that prompted the introduction of the "Old Hundred," whose dignified grandeur stood out in massive contrast with the agitated duel between Hester and her husband, but Mr. Damrosch did not compose the "Old Hundred." The madrigal was a charming touch, but it owed its effect to the quaint suggestion it carried with it of scores of similar works by Wilbye and the masters of the madrigalian school with its delightful "fa la la" burden. The prelude to the second act with its beautiful theme given out by the cello beneath the sustained chords with arpeggi from the harp and leading up to a powerful climax with the entrance on the violins suggested vaguely Wagner's "Albumblatt," but it was one of the most enjoyable details of the work. Hester's scene in the forest was also effective almost throughout and it was a stroke of artistic inspiration that prompted the little ascending and descending figure in the muted cello.

Mme. Nordica sang the music of Hester with a far more convincing dramatic instinct than was in the music itself. The scene in the forest was well given and the large style that the singer displayed in the prayer was admissible. Sig. Campanary sang Chillingworth's role like a musician and an artist. Mr. Conreid Behrens and Mr. Ericson F. Bushnell were heard in the music of the governor and Wilson respectively, and Mr. W. H. Reiger sang Arthur's music effectively, but it was no kindness to either the audience or singer to entrust even so minor a part as that of Brackett to Mr. Thompson.—New York correspondence.

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