

*THE BENCH AND BAR OF TO-DAY.*

BY A LAYMAN.

The changes which have taken place during the last fifty years in the economical, social, and political conditions of this country—the increase of wealth, and its distribution—the growth of population, and the many new elements introduced—the rise of great corporations, rich and correspondingly influential—the larger national issues occupying the public mind—have not failed to produce a change in the position which the legal profession now occupies as compared to that which it held in our early history. Then it gave, almost, the only road to social eminence, and political advancement—now it has competition in every direction. Men engaged in trade and commerce—managers of great corporations—captains of great industries—occupy a larger space in the public view than was possible when the great developments of late years had not begun. Higher education is more widely diffused, and not, as formerly, confined to members of the learned professions.

Besides these there are many reasons for the apparent relative decline in the importance and influence of the judges of our Courts. It is no disparagement to those who now sit on the Bench to say that among their predecessors were men who had taken a great part in the public events of those early days of our struggle for existence, and that their names are associated with that part of our history in which we take most pride. And in making any comparison between the past and present it must be remembered that then there were not the facilities for earning large incomes outside of the profession which now exist—that the salaries of the judges were more in proportion to the cost of living, and to the incomes earned at the Bar, than has been the case for many years. From every point of view a seat on the Bench was then a prize worth accepting for its own sake—not as now thought of as beneath the consideration of men of eminence in the profession, or only to be regarded as a dernier resort, or as a position useful for some temporary purpose to be put aside when anything better presented itself. Then the position