

## HUMORS OF BENCH AND BAR.

BY W. H. BLAKE.

OSGOODE HALL, Toronto, presents a distinctly non-humorous aspect to the passer-by who contemplates its classic façade from Queen-street; and the harassed litigant or casual visitor who ventures within its portals hears and sees little to move him to laughter.

Even to those who there reap a precarious crop with the sickle of their eloquence, this vast legal mill has a certain awesomeness, and its daily grist is ground in a very sober and humdrum fashion.

A spirit of seriousness settles upon the curious ones who come to observe how Justice demeanes herself in her appointed home,—possibly arising from an uneasy feeling that to exhibit levity would be a contempt of Court, punishable with hideous despatch and in manner dire.

A brace of Fair-time rustics illustrated, not long since, this frame of mind. With an apologetic mien they were clumping through the corridors, occasionally passing remarks in a husky whisper, and seemingly were much oppressed by the pervading atmosphere of solemnity. Yearning for something more interesting, they ventured to address a gay young barrister, whose soul had not quite become as ashes within him, "Whar's the Museum?" The answer was: "There is no regular museum here, but you will find an excellent collection of fossils in that room,"—pointing to one of the courts. They entered, gazed vacantly about at Judges, Counsel, Clerk, Sheriff and Reporter, but spoke not nor smiled. The very air of the place forbade the idea of a jest, and probably they are wondering to this day what that too-sharp young lawyer was driving at.

Perhaps it is the principle of con-

trast that lends a peculiar fragrance to any flower of wit that ventures to blossom in so sterile a desert, and it is to be feared that such delicate plants cannot survive when deprived of their environment. With all diffidence, therefore, the task of transplantation is essayed.

It happens sometimes, when the circumstances forbid a smile by reason of the lack of humorous intent on the part of the Bench, that scenes occur, painful in their wealth of suppressed mirth. Figure to yourself a sultry day in June. At 11 o'clock Chancey Chambers opened bright and fair, but the afternoon is waning, the room is still full of those who crave an audience, and little has been accomplished. The time has passed in prosy and tedious disputes about trifles, and the atmosphere of the court is not only close and sultry, but dangerously surcharged with electricity. Talking has been severely checked from the Bench more than once, and now not a whisper is heard. In its turn the next motion is called on, and something supremely trivial is broached which bids fair to absorb most of the precious time remaining. As the involved skein is slowly unwound, the Judge lays down his pen (as one would deposit a burden too weighty to be longer borne), and turns to the window. The droning recitation of affidavits proceeds, but the Judge is far, far away—his gaze fixed on remotest space. Flies buzz at the panes and rival the reader's voice in their melancholy monotony. Hush! the Judge is thinking aloud. The reader stumbles, halts in the middle of a word, and bows his head. "It seems—to me—that the length-of matters—which-are brought—before this Court—is—in *inverse*