

can so impress a student with the greatness and variety of the forces of nature and their results as can the phenomena seen in the field. At Queen's the student of geology puts his questions directly to nature and from nature learns her secrets.—*W. M.*

### *Professor Macnaughton on Browning.*

MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY LECTURE.

PROFESSOR John Macnaughton, recently Professor of Classics in McGill University, Montreal, lectured to a large audience at the Manchester University last evening on the poetry of Robert Browning. "Pheidippides," one of Browning's dramatic idylls, was the immediate subject of the address, though Professor Macnaughton turned first into a general eulogy of the poet's work. He spoke of the wonderful way in which Browning reflected and even anticipated the intellectual tendencies of our time. "The great perennial problems—the meaning of human life, man's place in the world, his relation to God and his fellows—are treated by Browning more than by any other poet in the manner best corresponding to the particular angle at which they press upon us for solution. With all his roughness and unevenness, he is by far the strongest and most helpful of our recent English poets." What was described by the lecturer as a peculiarity in Browning was his extraordinary development of the historical spirit, a thing of which the eighteenth century was practically destitute. No poet had set himself in such a definite way to explore the past and to present life-like pictures of many of its most pregnant moments. His power amounted almost to clairvoyance across the centuries. To the ordinary poet the past was merely a convenient frame to secure the necessary remoteness and detachment and to give perfectly free play in creating an ideal world. The ordinary poet did not waste time in accurate study or careful delineation of the distinctive historical features of a particular period. It was not so with Browning. His study of the past approached the scientific; he tried to realise it as it actually was until it became alive and visible for him once more. Hence arose the difficulties and obscurities sometimes found in his work. He was so full of his subject that a reader to whose mind the time was less present in all its circumstances frequently found great difficulty in following him. Often even Browning's memory lost something of the freshness of impressions which actuated his writings years before. He was reported to have said once that when he wrote something only God and himself knew what it meant; "now," he added, "only God knows." In "Pheidippides" the poet had chosen a typical figure and a significant incident in the history of Greece, which by his almost incredibly bold handling and the deliberate inventions of his own imagination were made to state all he wanted to say. All the facts were got from Herodotus, though details had been added which Browning seemed to have invented in obedience to some inward pressure of his own artistic instincts. The poem showed a vital grasp of