

were doubtless disappointed in not hearing something new to them, but we hope it proved a source of instruction to those who have not had this privilege. It could hardly be expected that such a comprehensive subject could be treated more minutely in a lecture, evidently intended for a more mixed audience.

Mr. Campbell made reference in his lecture to the site of our institutions as regards the beauty of the scenery as being second to none in the Province. The lecturer's enthusiasm with his subject, and his ready wit, coupled with the strong Scotch accent, elicited frequent bursts of applause.

### *Echoes of the Past.*

No. 4.

RHETORIC.

Rhetoric and Belles Lettres by Hugh Blair, D. D., F. R. S.! Ye gods, what startling memories do these words awaken! Again I hear the clatter of tripping, willing (?) feet upon the old College stairs, as Sophomores hasten to the Lecture Room to deliver themselves of the stately, measured, periods of the minister of The High Church of Edinburgh. In a few moments the old ponderous wooden benches with perpendicular backs,—the principal furniture of the room,—are occupied by students whose faces bear evidence of extreme nervousness. All eyes are turned in the direction of the door; for the professor has not yet arrived. Very soon he enters; the scholars rise in courtesy; all are seated. For a few seconds you could hear a pin fall. But the time has come for the silence to be broken, and "Hickson may begin" is the opening of a truly intellectual battle.

Now the unfortunate Soph. thus suddenly and ruthlessly called upon had, as he thought, aboundingly prepared the first half of the first lecture of Blair's memorable text-book. I say abounding preparation; for a *verbatim et literatim* recitation was regarded as the acme of perfection. The first sentence is recited with a majesty of expression and ring of emphasis altogether worthy of the great original: "*One of the most distinguished privileges which Providence has conferred upon mankind is*

*the power of communicating their thoughts to one another.*" So far all went merry as a marriage bell. But no power of abstraction or reproduction the poor Soph. possessed could summon the first word of the second sentence. Hence the fixed look into vacancy, and the large drops of perspiration that stood upon his face. Give me the nexus, he inly exclaimed, give me the nexus by which, as the link of a concatenated series, I may pull up the thought into memory. But his powers of ratiocination utterly failed to give him the requisite clue. He failed, blushing confessed it, and received the inevitable and irreparable cipher. "The next" was again heard from the chair, and Chase with commendable promptness, uttered forth the ruinously stubborn sentence: "*Destitute of this power, reason would be a solitary, and, in some measure, an unavailable principle.*" With equal glibness the following period is given:—but the raiment of the next thought has faded from sight, and the doom of "the next" is likewise sealed. Thus the conflict continued to rage—success and disaster alternating with singular regularity. The firm resolve made by the class at the end of the hour, to trust less in Blair and more in themselves, was sadly weakened by the test of the next day's experiences.

In spite of these failures whole and partial, no studies of the College Course received such faithful and unremitting attention as Blair's Lectures. We thought that with the aid these afforded no subject either simple, or complex, shallow, or deep, could fail to receive masterly treatment. The chapters on Sublimity, Beauty, Perspicuity and Precision, Structure of Sentences, Personification, Apostrophe, Antithesis, and Characters of Style, were read with mingled wonder and delight, accompanied by violent excitement and agitation of mind. For some of us figures had an irresistible fascination: Personification became a mania to the majority. To almost all the inanimate objects in our rooms we addressed ourselves. The most trivial things became instinct with life. Soon we became pretty sure our passionate appeals were listened to. Then it was our eloquence waxed fervent! To show this, it may not be amiss to give one specimen of this startling effect of Rhetorical studies upon unsophisticated minds. The ex-