

THE THEATRE OF ANCIENT TIMES.

Professor Darnley Naylor delivered his third extension lecture at the Institute Hall on Tuesday evening 29th ultimo. He dealt with theatre-going in classic times, choosing particularly the year 431 B.C., as both Sophocles and Euripides plays were performed that year, and one of them "The Medea" is still procurable. The lecturer invited his audience "to put back the clock," and come with me to the city of Athens. Let us drink the magic herb at once. Good! we have drunk; and at the wish we find ourselves standing on the shore of Piraeus, the Port Adelaide of Athens, (only not so ugly). It is March 25th B.C. 431 and we mingle with the holiday-makers who are celebrating the festival of Dionysius. Small crowds watch the circus, where two damsels are turning somersaults. A monkey show etc., and listen to fiddlers; and knots of noisy politicians. Tomorrow we hear that the poets are going to compete in the tragedies and comedies on the stage of the theatre of Dionysius, accompanied by their actors, chorus, and choregus. (the state appointed official who paid the expenses of each poet's play). Wine is flowing freely, great bowls of it are provided where everyone can take their fill. In the evening a torchlight procession is witnessed, when the youths who have just come of age (18 years) and who are called the 'Ephēbi' draw the statue of Dionysius Elentheress from its place and convey it to the theatre where they set it in the open space of about 25 feet, surrounded by tiers of seats constructed of marble or limestone, where he is to remain for the next four days facing the stage. Next day there is another procession witnessed or taken part in, by Athenians of every class. Chorus of 50 strong compete, five of boys and five of men, and after a close contest Antiochis carries off the prize. The following day an audience of nearly 3,000 people assemble at the theatre, while the frost is on the grass and the air is crisp and cold, the semicircular tiers of seats open to the sky above are thronged with people. Ten seats are reserved, these are to be occupied by the judges of the two competitions. At the top sit the ladies, below them the "ephebi," next the men. Tickets are given up at the entrance near the stage and cost 3d for the day; the poor have a free pass. The aged priest of Dionysius opens the proceedings, and the first row who are priests of all denominations are sprinkled with lustral water. The opening services are over, and a herald proclaims that Euripides is to bring on his tragedies first. They are as usual three, and a satyric play. We gasp! It means seven hours work, and in the afternoon the first comic poet will exhibit his play. We almost faint at the thought, that is another three hours good. The theatre is so constructed that every person in that vast audience can hear perfectly. Should the silence be disturbed by an audible giggle, up rush the attendants, staves in hand and administer what causes the offenders to maintain a holy silence for the rest of the festival. At the end of the last day of the festival, the awards are given by the judges, amidst high excitement, and the verdict goes to Euphorion. There is shouting, congratulations, commiserations and weeping, and the victor steps forward and is crowned with fine dignity by the Lord Mayor." The eloquent apology made by Professor Darnley Naylor "for attempting to popu' the classic-