

others had discovered, but with the great ocean of truth lying all undiscovered before him.

"The sciences," says Pascal,* one of the master minds of the world, "have two extremities which touch each other; the first is that pure ignorance in which all men are born. The other extremity is that which is reached by those great souls who have traversed the whole extent of human knowledge, and return to the same sense of ignorance from which they set out. But this is that learned ignorance which knows itself." We have here the truth which corresponds with the statement of St. Paul: "If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know." (1 Cor. viii. 2.)

But valuable as a humble mind is in the seeker after truth, it is but the first and only a kind of preliminary requirement for the pursuit of knowledge. In order to carry on the work effectually, we must conquer ourselves, we must overcome our sloth by the laborious concentration of the attention, and by continuous toil. It may seem but poor encouragement to the learner, but we must doubt whether any great enthusiasm will ever be kindled by the assurance that the work which is to be done will make no serious call upon the self-denial of him who is to be the doer of it.

The concentration of attention is indispensable in the acquisition of all knowledge which deserves the name. Attention is, in truth, the helm by which the mind of man is governed and directed. It is the explanation of most of the differences by which one man is distinguished from another. According to the direction and concentration of a man's attention, such is the man. In other words, according as a man gives his whole

mind, or a part of his mind, to this thing or to that thing, so is his intelligence informed, his will shaped, his whole character moulded.

"Attention," says Sir W. Hamilton,* "is to consciousness what the contraction of the pupil is to sight. . . . The greater capacity of continuous thinking that a man possesses, the longer and more steadily can he follow out the same train of thought, the stronger is his power of attention; and in proportion to his power of attention will be the success with which his labour is rewarded. All commencement is difficult, and this is more especially true of intellectual effort. But if we are vigorous enough to pursue our course in spite of obstacles, every step, as we advance, will be found easier, the mind becomes more animated and energetic; the distractions gradually diminish, the attention is more exclusively concentrated upon its object, the kindred ideas flow with greater freedom and abundance. The difference between an ordinary mind and the mind of a Newton consists principally in this, that the one is capable of the application of a more continuous attention than the other. This is, in fact, what Sir Isaac, with equal modesty and shrewdness, himself admitted. To one who complimented him on his genius, he replied that if he had made any discoveries it was owing more to patient attention than to any other talent. It is very much the judgment expressed by the late Mr. Carlyle, when he pronounced genius to be "a transcendent capacity for taking trouble."

And this is only one part of the general truth, that, in the pursuit of knowledge there must be devotion, labour, toil, the ardent devotion of a love which will never desist from

*"Pensées," Art. iii. 18. (Ed. of Havet.)

*Metaph. Lect. xiv., (vol. i., p. 248.) The whole lecture deserves study.