

Father Burke was asked by a young clergyman how best he could improve his preaching, he answered, "Fill up the cask ! fill up the cask ! fill up the cask ! and then if you tap it anywhere, you will get a good stream. But if you put in but little, it will dribble, dribble, dribble, and you must tap, tap, tap, and then you get but a small stream after all." The age of miracles is past, and the cruse of oil and the vessel of meal will not be replenished unless you will fill them with your own hand.

But patient study is not so valuable as patient thinking. We are none the better for our daily food if we are unable to assimilate it. If we store up materials with the diligence of the bee, we need the bee's power of elaborating them into wax or honey. A man whose brain is crushed beneath a superincumbent weight of accumulated facts has no active intellectual existence of his own ; he does not think or feel, he simply collects. He has no idea of the relations towards one another of the facts he has gathered, of their comparative value, of their bearing upon particular lines of reflection. He is like the laborer who piles up by the wayside a great heap of stone or iron ; what can he do with it until the engineer has planned the road or designed the bridge ? But the true student will be laborer and engineer in one ; his brain will dispose of the store which his memory has stored and assorted. He will study profoundly, but he will also think profoundly. He will not be content with amassing the thoughts of other men, but will strain them through his own intellectual alembic until he gets at their most precious elements. What will it avail to know all about the stamen and petals of the daisy if he make no attempt to think out the thought that lies in the cup of that "wee, modest, crimson-tipped flower?"

And from these remarks we may strike out a hint to be of service to us in our studies. We must read to think ; we must bring together our material with a view to making use of it. Now there are books which crush thought by their heaviness, and others, which dissipate it by their levity. There are books that chill and enfeeble instead of strengthening and stimulating. The wise student will turn aside

from all such, and confine his attention to those books only which will help him in his great work of self-culture. The biographer of Fichte, comparing him with a dry-as-dust contemporary, remarks, that "all the truth written by the latter is not worth a tithe of the false which Fichte may have written. The one gives us a small number of known truths ; the other gives us perhaps one truth, but, in so doing, opens before us the prospect of an infinity of unknown truths." And it is just this quality which makes Fichte and writers like Fichte so valuable ; they teach us to think. The divine spark set free from the altar of their genius alights upon the inert dulness of our drowsy brain, and quickens it into wholesome activity. They send forth their breath to breathe upon the dead bones ; "and behold a shaking, and the bones come together, bone to his bone, . . . and they live."

3. Spiritual.—But now we must turn for a moment to that spiritual training which he who seeks success in life can by no means afford to neglect or forego. Mind and soul are so intimately connected, that what acts upon the one will react upon the other. The intellect and imagination cannot be healthy unless the soul be satisfied and at peace. No man can think generously who does not live devoutly. But to live devoutly we must subject the soul to as rigid a discipline as that which we enforce upon mind or body. Goodness is no spontaneous growth ; like knowledge, it can be acquired only by assiduous wrestling. Purity, whether of body or soul, cannot become ours except by slow degrees, step by step, gradually and painfully. The evil spirit can be driven away from us only by prayer and fasting. Says St. Francis of Sales : "The work of the soul's purification neither may nor can end save with life itself ;—do not then let us be disheartened by our imperfections,—our very perfection lies in diligently contending against them ; and it is impossible so to contend without seeing them, or to overcome without meeting them face to face. . . . David continually asks the Lord to strengthen his heart against cowardice and discouragement ; and it is our privilege in this war that we are certain to vanquish so long as we are willing to fight."