

## Chapter II.—Sources

**Reading.**—As was stated above, together with the training of certain faculties, the acquisition of special knowledge is required ; and in the first instance “reading” was mentioned. This exercise provides the mind and the imagination with all the varied materials required for essay-writing, which observation alone could never supply.

Reading constantly replenishes our stock of ideas and words ; it enables us to reap the benefits of centuries of experience ; it opens up to us the accumulated wealth of original thoughts supplied by many great men who knew how to see and how to write. This borrowing will no more preclude us from making personal observations than the reading of Théophile Gautier’s *Voyage en Italie* or the perusal of Taine’s *Voyage aux Pyrénées* would prevent us from paying a visit to either place.

But what is to be read ? Are we to suggest the greatest writers as alone offering examples of what is beautiful, or as being less likely to be open to criticism on account of their fame ? Or shall we select works from second-rate authors as well, these being nearer to the level of the average reader and therefore more easily assimilated by him ? It would seem best that, under his teacher’s guidance, the student should read both. Diderot said : “ Il n’y a point de bons livres pour un sot ; il n’y en a peut-être pas un mauvais pour un homme de sens.” (He no doubt meant “pour une femme de sens” as well.) Joubert wrote : “ Il est impossible de devenir très instruit si on ne lit que ce qui plaît.”

Therefore, read widely. This is possible, even at school, in spite of an overcrowded time-table. Do not confine your reading to works of the nineteenth century, but extend your welcome to those of the eighteenth and seventeenth centuries ; as you get proficient, do not neglect to become acquainted with older writers such as Froissart or Joinville. Do not treat