

necessary talk about our ailments. Cold and hard as it may seem, the fact is nevertheless true, and will ever remain so, that the vast majority of people are interested in what is pleasant in our lives, but not in what is unpleasant. Pains and sorrows are elements in our lives which are sacred and interesting only to ourselves."

—WE are all tempted at times to doubt those parts of the biographies of famous men which treat of their early youth, and more particularly when we are told of the marvellous progress which some of these "infant prodigies" are supposed to have made in their youthful studies. Whatever we may have thought at such times, few of us have had the audacity to challenge the truth of the biographer, still less of the autobiographer. Now, however, some one has written to the *School Journal*, venturing to suggest that there is an educational danger in these otherwise harmless exaggerations—exaggerations which the writer referred to calls "big lies for little folks." He says:

In the olden time, the biographer endowed his hero with super-human wisdom and all the virtues of the fabled gods. The fictitious achievements of the mighty So-and-So were recorded in heroic hyperbole, unhampered by truth. The great were deified, and literature teemed with demigods and prodigies. Nor have the spirit of exaggeration and the love of the marvellous become extinct. Here, for instance, is an extract from a biography of John Fiske, published by a well-known house and intended especially for public schools: "His actual scholastic preparation for college may be said to have begun when he was six years old. At seven he was reading Cæsar, and had read Rollin, Josephus, and Goldsmith's Greece. Before he was eight he had read the whole of Shakespeare and a good deal of Milton, Bunyan, and Pope. He began Greek at nine. By eleven he had read Gibbon, Robertson, and Prescott, and most of Froissart, and at the same age, wrote from memory a chronological table from B. C. 1,000 to A. D. 1820;" and so on until he was sixteen, when he had read everything under the sun and had learned everything that mortal man ever knew or ever can know. The biographer fails to mention when Mr. Fiske learned such common things as spelling, grammar, arithmetic, and geography. Did he master these before the age of six, or did they come to him in his dreams? If he had mastered