A POTENT POEM, the potency of which has shown itself in causing the withdrawal of Professor Kuno Meyer's candidacy for the exchange professorship at Harvard next season, has enjoyed an unexpectedly wide publicity after its recent initial appearance in "The Harvard Advocate." Awarded by Dean Briggs and Professor Bliss Perry the prize offered by this student publication for the best poem on the European war, this piece of verse, from the pen of Mr. C. Huntington Jacobs, of the junior class, takes its place beside Hoffmann von Fallersleben's "Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles" as a generator of strife. It is entitled "Gott mit Uns," and is doubtless familiar to most readers by this time. That Euterpe or Polyhymnia or any other of the Muses should thus become involved with Mars in a quarrel so abhorrent, as one would suppose, to the Pierian Nine, must excite regret. The present incident, which has elicited an impassioned protest from our distinguished visitor, may perhaps serve a useful end in illustrating how trivial a matter will evoke the most vehement demonstrations of wrath when the atmosphere is tense with such bitter animosities as those of the present time. We are living in a powder magazine, and must be careful with our matches.

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SECOND-HAND KNOWLEDGE OF BOOKS is very decidedly abundant, as compared with direct acquaintance. The hardest work in the world is to think independently; therefore mankind in general is glad to be told what it ought to think about the great masters of literature, and what book-titles and other scraps of literary information it ought to have at its tongue's end. Addison and Johnson, Montaigne and Voltaire, Schiller and Goethe, Homer and Dante and even Shakespeare, are little more than names to many persons who have the reputation of being well-read and perhaps actually think themselves to be so. This vague half-knowledge, or one-tenth-knowledge, however, is rarely made the object of deliberate commendation on the part of anyone whose opinion is of value. Yet some such praise seems to be bestowed by "The Bulletin of the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences" when in a recent well-deserved tribute to Professor Copeland of Harvard it says: "Many Harvard men owe their knowledge of eighteenth-century English, of Fielding and Smollett, of Goldsmith and Pope, directly to Mr. Copeland rather than to their readings in history or literature of that age." Might it not have been more complimentary to Professor Copeland, and also nearer the truth, to say that many Harvard men owe their knowledge of the authors named to their readings in those authors, prompted by their teacher, even more than to his personal instruction? Contact with a born educator does not convert the pupil into a sponge; he is rather fired with zeal for more positive intellectual activity than is implied in mere absorption. The assimilation of knowledge, like the assimilation of food, calls for a considerable amount of reactive energy.

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A DEFINITION OF GREAT LITERATURE, from Mr. Howells's pen, has gained considerable currency of late, and its pithy brevity makes it worth committing to memory. It was after commending the unstudied effectiveness of Grant's style in his "Personal Memoirs" that he enunciated, in explanation of the book's recognized claim to greatness, the truth that "great literature is nothing more nor less than the clear expression of minds that have something great in them, whether religion, or beauty, or deep experience." This helps to explain why, as Leslie Stephen was wont to affirm, the best biography is that which approaches the nearest to autobiography; and it was with some such truth in mind that Edward Rowland Sill used to declare the only thing a man was really competent to write about was himself. Hence, too, as has been more than once pointed out, the truly great novel is, in essentials, autobiographical, though it is by no means necessary that it should be written in the first person, and it does not at all follow that every work of fiction presented as autobiography is possessed of greatness. Those novelists who hope to impart an otherwise unattainable virtue to their productions by making them autobiographic in form, but not in substance, may deceive themselves, though they will never deceive a discerning reader.