

HALF-HOLIDAY TALKS ON ANCIENT HISTORY.

BY JOSEPHINE H. GRAHAM, B.A., WHITBY, ONT.

TED'S "big sister," who has just come home from Europe, and of whom Ted is immensely proud (though he wouldn't acknowledge it for the world,) looks up from her story of Stanley in Africa as Ted bangs his book upon the table and savagely chews a stubby lead pencil.

"So you 'hate history' do you Ted? Especially *Ancient* history; and you think it is 'a horrid grind to have to take it.' Take it! Well if you look upon it as medicine I don't wonder at your use of such vigorous expressions, but"—

(Ted looks uncomfortable, so his big sister smiles reluctantly and continues)—

"Well, I won't preach, Ted. But do you know I think that you are not taking hold of it at the right end, most things get into a snarl because people will persist in tugging at the wrong end."

"Suppose you read me over those notes you made about half-an-hour ago, which you've been trying so hard to 'cram' ever since."

Ted reads:—

"Reign of Nebuchadnezzar.....	B. C.	604 to 561
Reign of Pisistratus in Athens....	"	560 " 527
Capture of Babylon by Cyrus.....	"	" .. 536
Egypt conquered by Cambyeses ...	"	" .. 525

"Want any more? That's only four out of the whole beautiful dozen I've got to get off for to-morrow's lesson."

"Why, Ted! Is *that* the way you study?—I don't wonder at your hating it. Isn't it anything more to you than a string of names with dates attached, to be learned to-day and forgotten to-morrow?"

(There is such grieved astonishment in the big sister's voice that Ted hastens to exculpate himself at the expense of his syntax.)—"Us fellows all study it that way; and as long as Morton thinks we're straight on the names and dates,—'everything's lovely and the goose hangs high;' but just you wait till a fellow trips on some one of these old beggars, and *then* you'll see double stars!"

For fully three minutes Ted's sister sits and thinks. Then she says,—*"I wish you had been with me Ted when I was at Chamounix; there where the Col. de Balm or the Tete Noir marks the Alpine boundaries of the beautiful valley, stretching away on either side peak after peak, springing out from that wall of mountain, and each peak sharply defined against that wonderful blue sky. There were the lofty summits of the Domes, there Aiguilles, there, nearer, were the crevices, the avalanche beds, the glaciers, the leaping cataraets, there fine green fields and tiny villages."*

"I didn't see the Alps all at once, but bit by bit I grew to know and love them, studying their outlines, and feeling the meaning of their names."

"Now, Ted, that's the way to study history. The will, the words and the acts of great men; the hero who represents the millions he influenced; Darius, not Persian history; Alexander, not Grecian history; Napoleon, not French history. Get hold of the facts, study the plans and purposes and failures and triumphs of the world's great leaders, and then and not till then will you know and love

history. Do you remember what Emerson says,—*'When nature has work to be done she creates a genius to do it. Follow the great man and you will see what the world has at heart in these ages. There is no omen like that.'*"

"Now you know you can't study these men unless you know where to place them; you must follow their wanderings through the great plains of Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt; seek for their footsteps as they march down to the sea across Greece, Italy, Germany, and Britain; scale the mountain fastnesses of Seir and Switzerland and find them in their natural fortresses. Not a sea or desert but has its story of brave explorers; not a mountain or river or splendid ruin but cries 'We are immortal because to us are linked those names which the world will not let die, names of warriors, saints and sages.' So, Ted, to study history you must study geography."

"And because man was made in the image of God he becomes a creator. The hut that is built to protect his body from the heat and cold, the fortress that is reared to protect his borders from the invader, the palace or pyramid that is piled as a monument to his pride, the temple or mosque in which he goes up to worship,—all become instinct with deeper meaning when you look upon them as monuments of man's activity, part of his story written in stone and marble, telling of great men, great deeds, or great ideas, that have 'had their day and ceased to be.' So to study history you must study architectural antiquities."

"But back of all great deeds and great men there is a Great Power which the plummet and man's wisdom cannot fathom. There is the great God who gives to man a freedom and an opportunity for which he is held responsible 'to the uttermost farthing'; who punishes and who rewards; who develops through the slow centuries those plans of which some are now manifest, others yet to be made plain. We would understand the *philosophy* of history, Teddie, if we could understand it not as biographical, nor geographical, nor monumental history, but as *Providential*. 'Then shall ye see the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God, and of his Son Jesus Christ.'"

There was a soft hush in the little room as Ted's sister ceased speaking.

Her white fingers had been threading in and out of the kindly little brown curls that had been close to her knee for the last ten minutes; the stubby pencil had hidden away under the cover of the note-book, and Ted was meditating. Suddenly he said,—*"I say, Sis, sposin' Tom was to come around to-morrow—Tom's my chum, and we generally 'cram' half-an-hour or so Wednesday afternoons,—would you mind giving us a boost over some of those hard places? He'd like it tremendously I know, for he hates it just as hard as I do—or did."*—he added, looking up with such a twinkle in his bright eyes that the big sister smiled and said,

"Very well Ted. It's a bargain. If you will go with me we'll take a through ticket from the Tower of Babel to Independence Hall, with liberty to stop over at, say twelve interesting places along the line." And this was how Ted and Tom and the big sister began their half-holiday talks on Ancient History.