

TIME FLIES: A READING DIARY

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Time flies: a reading diary by Christina G. Rossetti

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CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI

**TIME FLIES: A
READING DIARY**

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A READING DIARY

BY

CHRISTINA G. ROSSETTI,

AUTHOR OF "LEADER AND SPIRIT," ETC.

"A day's march nearer home."

JAMES MONTGOMERY.

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TO

MY BELOVED EXAMPLE, FRIEND,

MOTHER.

"Her children arise up, and call her blessed,"

TIME FLIES:
A Reading Diary.

January 1.

THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION.

MOTHER Church who opens the ecclesiastical year for her children with the alarm of Advent, opens for them the civil year with a Divine example of self denial.

For whatever Christ did or suffered for us was all, first and last, the loving choice of His own free Will.

Christ met but a cold welcome into this cold world when a public inn could not take Him in; "there was no room for Him," and only a stable afforded Him shelter: thus He began His natural human life.

And He was but eight days old when He shed the first drops of His Blood: thus (in a sense) He began His spiritual life.

His natural and His spiritual life began one with privation, the other with suffering.

Let us not be too eager to lie soft and warm, or too chary of undergoing pain. Had anyone been ready to forego bed on that first Christmas Eve in favour of a poor wayfaring woman ill fitted to encounter the brunt of hardship, he also like St. Joseph would have ranked as the Lord's foster-father.

In these days and to the end of time the Beatitude stands open to all: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

January 2.

I.

A CERTAIN masterly translator has remarked that whatever may or may not constitute a good translation, it cannot consist in turning a good poem into a bad one.

This suggestive remark opens to investigation a world-wide field. Thus, for instance, he (or she) cannot be an efficient Christian who exhibits the religion of love as unlovely.

Christians need a searching self-sifting on this point. They translate God's law into the universal tongue of all mankind: all men of all sorts can read them, and in some sort cannot but read them.

Scrupulous Christians need special self-sifting. They too often resemble translations of the letter in defiance of the spirit: their good poem has become unpoetical.

They run the risk of figuring as truthful offensively, conscientious unkindly, firm feebly, in the right ridiculously. Common sense has forsaken them: and what gift or grace can quite supply the lack of common sense?

Reverently I quote to my neighbour (and to *myself*) the grave reproof of St. James: "My brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Stars, like Christians, utter their silent voice to all lands and their speechless words to the ends of the world. Christians are called to be like stars, luminous, steadfast, majestic, attractive.

January 3.

2.

SCRUPULOUS persons,—a much tried and much trying sort of people, looked up to and looked down upon by their fellows.

Sometimes paralysed and sometimes fidgeted by conscientiousness, they are often in the way yet often not at hand.

The main pity is that they do not amend themselves. Next to this, it is a pity when they gratuitously attempt what under the circumstances they cannot perform.

Listen to an anecdote or even to a reminiscence from their lips, and you are liable to hear an exercise on possible contingencies: a witticism hangs fire, a heroic example is dwarfed by modifying suggestions, Eloquence stammers in their mouth, the thread even of logic is snapped.

Their aim is to be accurate; a worthy aim: but do they achieve accuracy? Such handling as blunts the pointed and flattens the lofty cannot boast of accuracy.

These remarks have, I avow, a direct bearing on my own case. I am desirous to quote here or there an illustrative story or a personal reminiscence: am I competent so to do? I may have misunderstood, I may never have understood, I may have forgotten, in some instances I cannot recall every detail.

Yet my story would point and cleave my little essay.

So here once for all I beg my readers to accept such illustrations as no more than I give them for; true or false, accurate or inaccurate, as the case may

be. One perhaps embellished if I have the wit to embellish it, another marred by my clumsiness.

All alike written down in the humble wish to help others by such means as I myself have found helpful.

January 4.

A HEAVY heart, if ever heart was heavy,
 I offer Thee this heavy heart of me.
 Are such as this the hearts Thou art fain to levy
 To do and dare for Thee, to bleed for Thee?—
 Ah, blessed heaviness, if such they be!

Time was I bloomed with blossom and stood leafy
 How long before the fruit, if fruit there be :
 Lord, if by bearing fruit my heart grows heavy,
 Leafless and bloomless yet accept of me
 The stript fruit-bearing heart I offer Thee.

Lifted to Thee my heart weighs not so heavy,
 It leaps and lightens lifted up to Thee ;
 It sings, it hopes to sing amid the bevy
 Of thousand thousand choirs that sing, and see
 Thy Face, me loving for Thou lovest me.

January 5.

CAN anything be sadder than work left unfinished?
 Yes : work never begun.

"Well begun is half done," says our English proverb.

Whilst the Italians say : " Il più duro passo è quello della soglia " (The hardest step is at the threshold) : and again, " Cosa fatta capo ha " (That which is *done* has a beginning).

True, the final verdict depends on the ending : but

neither good nor bad ending can ensue except from some manner of beginning.

I have heard tell of a painter who sought far and wide for an atmosphere wherein to paint. At last he found an available atmosphere in Italy: and returning thither he worked? . . . not so: he died.

A bad beginning may be retrieved and a good ending achieved. No beginning, no ending.

It is bad to work loiteringly: it may be worse to loiter instead of beginning to work at all.

January 6.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

- “LORD Babe, if Thou art He
 We sought for patiently,
 Where is Thy court?
 Hither may prophecy and star resort;
 Men heed not their report.”—
 “Bow down and worship, righteous man:
 This Infant of a span
 Is He man sought for since the world began.”—
- “Then, Lord, accept my gold, too base a thing
 For Thee, of all kings King.”
- ‘Lord Babe, despite Thy youth
 I hold Thee of a truth
 Both Good and Great:
 But wherefore dost Thou keep so mean a state,
 Low lying, desolate?’—
 “Bow down and worship, righteous seer:
 The Lord our God is here
 Approachable, Who bids us all draw near.”—
- “Wherefore to Thee I offer frankincense,
 Thou Sole Omnipotence.”