

**THE SNOW-DROP: A
BIRTHDAY STORY FOR JESSIE
PERCY BUTLER DUNCAN,
FEBRUARY 9TH, 1865**

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The Snow-drop: A Birthday Story for Jessie Percy Butler Duncan, February 9th, 1865 by W. B. Duncan

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W. B. DUNCAN

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THE
S N O W - D R O P

A BIRTHDAY STORY

FOR

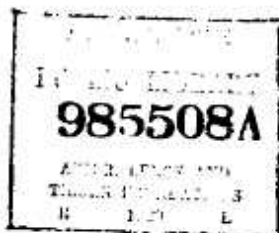
JESSIE PERCY BUTLER DUNCAN

FEBRUARY 9th, 1865.



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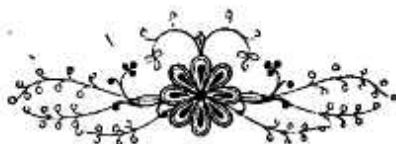
P R E F A C E.

THIS story may be dull, but at least it is not long. If it be little, the person for whom it is written and printed is not very large; and if it be bad, the author of it does not assume to be very good himself.

FEBRUARY 1st, 1865.

W. J. R. 19 FEB 36





THE SNOW-DROP.



It was a dark, chill Christmas Eve, oh! ever and ever so many years ago, away up in the mountain-tops, where rock was piled upon rock, and every thing was drear, and desolate, and cold. What little of sunshine there had been through the day was long spent and gone, and the sun itself had sunk behind the bank of thick gray clouds which was gradually overspreading the whole horizon. The heavens looked frowningly down, and the winds sighed mournfully over the bare granite peaks. Then, as the evening gloom grew deeper, their notes were changed for wild gusty wailings, and then the snow-storm commenced. First, a few large flakes fell scatteringly here and there, as feathers might have fallen from the flight

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of a flock of wild swans overhead; but after a little they came down thicker and thicker, faster and more fast, until all the atmosphere was filled with the blinding snow-drops, which the howling winds whirled hither and thither in wild eddying columns. Keener and keener blew the nipping blast. It cut through the blackness of the night like a sharpened sword. The very crags, firm-rooted as they were in the heart of the mountain, seemed to quail before the storm's mad rage, and shrank and shuddered at the convulsion of the elements, as though the horrors of a universal death had enveloped the world.

Far down, miles and miles away below, on the broad plains that stretched out from the last descending slope of the mountains, there were on this Christmas Eve no trouble and no storm. For them the day had been pleasant and the evening calm. The sun had set serenely and in quiet; the stars came brightly forth to greet the night, and from the blue depths above the moon shone placidly down as she travelled a course unstained by mist or cloud. Only, as the waning day was drawing to its end, the old men of the village, looking from their half-opened doors towards the distant summit of the loftiest mountain that their eyes could reach, and the while gossiping with



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each other, marked the signs of the far-away skies, and would say,—“Ah! the old fellow is going to sleep in a white nightcap to-night! God pity all poor souls that wander astray in the hills between this and the blessed morrow!” Within doors fires gleamed brightly on the hearth of every house, lights danced through the casements, flowers and evergreens festooned the walls, and sweet music and merry laughter told how on Christmas Eve young and old, high and low, rich and poor, shared alike in the joyful union of a common nurture and a common faith. And from door to door, and from window to window, went the singers, celebrating with rustic voice the holy cause of all this rejoicing. Thus it was they sung,—

A CHRISTMAS SONG.

I.

WHEN the Holy Child was at Bethlehem born,
The night was bright as a summer's morn;
The stars shone nearer,
And larger and clearer,
Than ever before they were seen to burn;
And the marvellous light of their lustrous flame
To the far Chaldean sages came.