

# AN ORPHAN'S BIRTHDAY.

BY SALLIE M. BRYAN.

How old am I? Say, how old can I be?  
But now my hair falls down to answer me;  
Oh, very strange! it wears a golden glow—  
Where have these many ages left their snow?

For have not ages past? And have not I  
Beheld them like black shadows gliding by,  
Raising and ruining with gigantic hand  
Bright palaces and temples dim and grand?

When Memnon—stony worshipper of fire!  
Tuned for his god, the Sun, a viewless lyre,  
Did I not hear each glad or wailing note  
Among the breezeless palms of Egypt float?

When by the strange-eyed seers in ancient nights  
From the sublimity of Asia's heights,  
The awful secrets of the sky were read,  
Did I not gaze above with voiceless dread?

When to the cradle of their infant king  
The magi of the Orient came to bring  
Their gifts of gold and myrrh, did I not see  
The star that led them to Divinity?

When on the cross, beneath a blackened sun,  
Thorn-crowned and bloody, hung God's Holy One,  
Was I not there, beside the mocking Jew,  
And cursed with an *undying* sorrow, too!

And when men made Religion of their dreams,  
Have I not, in its dim, illusive beams,  
Talked with Egeria by her cavern fount,  
And met the gods on the Olympian mount?

How I am wandering! \* \* *Mother!* dost thou know  
It is my birthday? Or has long ago  
Faded from thy soul's memory, as the flowers  
Did from our garden—now no longer ours?

What glories light the sunset's silent strand!  
And is it fancy! No—I see them stand,  
Two angels, that seem gazing at my world  
As if their wings from flight but now were furled.

Oh, Mother—*oh, my Mother!* is it thou,  
Who com'st with an attending spirit now  
To look upon thy child? But no, no, *no*—  
Thou couldst not stand afar and watch me so!

Why mock me? They are *not* weird shapes of cloud  
That 'mid yon burning splendors wait, unbowed,  
While I fling kisses toward their shores of light:  
Oh, take them to my mother, angels bright!

But go not yet—alas! ye may not stay;  
The passing sunset bears your forms away:  
Ye vanish from my gaze like all things fair  
That ever shed their gleams of beauty there.

Ah, the moon rises—now *it* ever seems  
To blend a sadness with its quiet beams,  
And drag a veil of mist across the skies—  
But 't may be that the mist is in my eyes.

Oh! in those vast and glorious worlds of light,  
Which crowd the grand infinitude of night,  
Is there no room for me? that I must dwell  
'Mid dust and death, and hear, and say: Farewell?