

**WATCHING FOR  
THE DEAD, AND  
OTHER POEMS**

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Watching for the Dead, and Other Poems by Faith Chiltern

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BY

FAITH CHILTERN.



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### WATCHING FOR THE DEAD.

Suggested by hearing an aged man say of his wife, who had recently died, "I draw aside the curtain, and look out, but I can't see her coming."

---

PLAINTIVE words of tender longing  
From the aged and the lone ;  
While the memories round him thronging  
Gave impression to the tone  
Of the watcher  
Watching for the dear one flown.

Does it seem an old man's dreaming ?  
Does it seem a fancy strange ?  
Yet 'tis not all empty seeming  
Of the thoughts that wildly range ;  
Vainly watching  
Their return who know no change.

In the hours when darkness, hovering  
Over every hill and dale  
All earth's flowery glories covering,  
O'er it throws a shadowy veil ;  
While the starbeams  
Shine with beauty soft and pale.

Then does not the spirit, waking,  
Waking up to all its pain,  
Feel again its bitter aching ;  
Yearn with longings wild and vain  
For the loved ones  
Who will never come again ?

Or when in soft dreams we're lying,  
Cradled in the arms of sleep ;  
Do we not, their forms descrying,  
Once more with them smile or weep ;  
And beside them  
Festival or vigil keep ?

Long lost steps are round us gliding,  
Long lost voices greet our ear,  
Long lost friends, again confiding,  
As of yore are hovering near ;  
Then departing  
Fade away and disappear,

And we wake in fear and wonder,  
Wake to find that all have fled ;  
And that morn has rent asunder  
That which brought us back the dead ;  
Fast dissolving  
All the light their forms had shed,

Say, what are ye, dreams delusive,  
Strange, fantastic, floating things ?  
Tell me why ye come intrusive ;  
Whisper why your presence brings  
But to mock us  
Such bright phantoms on its wings.

But to mock us. For though smiling  
And enchanting dreams may be  
Yet they only are beguiling,  
And to dark reality  
    Sadly waking  
Lo! the fair-hued visions flee!

Then, oh then, in vain we listen,  
And the curtain draw aside;  
Watch to see the soft eyes glisten,  
Wait to hear the footsteps glide  
    Of the dear ones  
Who have crossed the mystic tide.

For awhile let Fancy, weaving  
Her stray thoughts into a wreath,  
Not despairing, not with grieving,  
See if ought may lie beneath;  
    Wandering calmly  
By the vale that looks on death.

Let imagination, roaming  
Linger on the plaintive theme,  
In the shadow of the gloaming  
On the margin of the stream,  
    Where the watchers  
Ever watching sit and dream.

Sit and dream—sometimes enshrouded  
In the darkness of the night;  
Sometimes through the heavens clouded  
Shines a ray of golden light,  
    On them falling  
Like a beam of glory bright.