# 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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## **FAITH CHILTERN**

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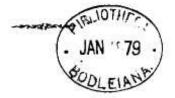


## WATCHING FOR THE DEAD,

AND OTHER POEMS.

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.