WATCHING FOR DAY.

White light, white snows, white faces wan,
   But crimson-red is the drift below ;
White is the plume of the dove and swan,
   But red as blood is the rose's glow ; —
And the dove is peace, and the swan is song,
And the summer of roses is lush and long.

In an ashen sky is a pallid band
   Of waning light near the cloudscape's rim,
And banners of smoke, on either hand,
   Lag to the distance dusky and dim ;
Banners of smoke that were bolts of flame,
O'er tombs of knights that have never a name.
One gaunt, grim tree, with its leafless crest,
Stretches withered arms to the spectral west,
And moans in the bleak wind passing by,
Like a hag in a snow-shroud left to die ;
And ghostly wings in the gloaming flap,
And ghostly beaks are plying—tap, tap,
On the cuirass ; tap, tap, on the sword ;
But the wearer and wielder say never a word,
Nor offer a feint, but a hollow groan,
A broken sigh, a pitiful moan—
Tap tap, on the skull, and tap, tap, on the bone,
Soon the corse and the crow will keep tryst alone.

Did ye say that the rose is red ?
   And the plume of the dove is white ?
The rose is for love and a perfumed bed,
   And white is the symbol of peace and light :
But the crow's black wing is a thing of dread
To shadow the lover's sleeping head ;
Nor yet for the rose is the hooting owl,
Nor yet for the peaceful, the gaunt wolves' howl !
Ah, God ! The gray wolves gather and prowl,
Where the quarry is thick, resting cheek by jowl.
See, how the crows fly—one, three, five,
And these must be dead, yet some are alive ;
But they have no strength, as they have no will,
To stay the gray wolf or the swart crow's bill !

White moonbeams falling on white brows—
What do they here by the drifted snows ?
There be footprints many, and trampled earth,
With broken trappings, and swords, no dearth !
But why do the sleepers lie so prone,
When the dusk descends as the day is done ?
Nor turn to the haven of home, sweet home,
Where voices of loved ones whisper, "Come !"
And arms that are empty, stretch to air,
Clasping the shade of the substance fair ?