

## SIGNS AND TOKENS

Said the red-cloaked crone

In a whispered moan:

"The dead man was limp

When laid in his chest;

Yea, limp; and why

But to signify

That the grave will crimp

Ere next year's sun

Yet another one

Of those in that house -

It may be the best -

For its endless drowse!"

Said the brown-shawled dame

To confirm the same:

"And the slothful flies

On the rotting fruit

Have been seen to wear

While crawling there

Crape scarves, by eyes

That were quick and acute;  
As did those that had pitched  
On the cows by the pails,  
And with flaps of their tails  
Were far away switched."

Said the third in plaid,  
Each word being weighed:

"And trotting does  
In the park, in the lane,  
And just outside  
The shuttered pane,  
Have also been heard -  
Quick feet as light  
As the feet of a sprite -  
And the wise mind knows  
What things may betide  
When such has occurred."

Cried the black-craped fourth,  
Cold faced as the north:

"O, though giving such  
Some head-room, I smile  
At your falterings

When noting those things  
Round your domicile!  
For what, what can touch  
One whom, riven of all  
That makes life gay,  
No hints can appal  
Of more takings away!"