

The Independent.

NEW YORK, THURSDAY, APRIL 19, 1888.

WARDROBE TALK.

BY GRACE DENIO LITCHFIELD.

CLICK!

Miss Minnie had just pushed to her wardrobe door, and the low murmur of silken talk that had ceased for a minute as the young mistress's hand wandered among the dresses, began again:

"I declare, I'm tired out," sighed the warm scarlet-lined cloak that had just entered, as it sank back in weary folds against the wall. "But I've had a glorious time! I've been out on the skating rink. Oh, we flew like birds over the ice, but happy looks and gay words flew faster, and I gathered a stray sentence or two to repeat to Miss Minnie the next time she puts me on. I never had anything to tell her before."

"That's why she never cared for you," murmured a soft tulle dress, out of its cloud-like draperies. "Now, she's very fond of me. I tell her so much! She never looks at me but I whisper: 'Oh, do you remember that fair midsummer night—the last party of the season? And she smiles dreamily and nods at me; and I tell her again of the sultry flower-perfumed night, of the garden, of the weird hanging lights, of the stars and of the poem they repeated together—he and she—as they walked to and fro there beneath them. They could only remember it in part—just the very last two lines; but Miss Minnie knows it all now, and loves it passing well. I have been to many parties besides, and danced myself to shreds, but I never tell her much of any other. Oh, she is very fond of me. I am the poetry of her life."

"Bah!" said a rich silk, with a stiff, indignant rustle, "I am her record of social triumphs, yet she never cares for any of the compliments I repeat to her, tho I assure you I make her a belle indeed, and am most necessary to her."

"Nay, pretty speeches are only pretty from loved lips," said a glossy gauze, sententiously. "Now I never try to remind her of anything save of a German we danced together once, and chiefly of the very last dance of all. Why, I have

talked volumes to her about that single dance, and oh, she loves me well! I am the unfinished romance of her life, and in me only can it end."

"Stuff!" ejaculated a white opera-cloak, rolling itself up into a comfortable warm heap on the floor. "She loves me best of you all, for I go with her everywhere, and many a snatch of golden words, a lingering pressure of her gloved hand, a quick farewell smile, have I told her of again as we drove home together. And as she draws me close over her beating bosom and buries her pink cheek in my downy fur; oh, how much have I not told her of that she will never, never weary of hearing again! You may rely upon it, whatever becomes of you all, Miss Minnie can never throw *me* aside. You may laugh. I know I am old and worn and moth-eaten; but to put me on is to wrap herself in a host of tender memories, to summon back the ghosts of sweet dead pleasures from many an unstoried grave, to live through again, one by one, days and hours and minutes that form epochs in her life's short history. I am a true and trusted friend. She has hoped hopes in me, dreamed dreams in me no one else can know. I am her private diary. I am become an actual part of herself and shall surely go with her into the tomb."

"You are very stuck-up and self-important, I must say," put in a slimy muslin with a limp, injured shake. "But you haven't been in all her good times notwithstanding. To be sure that last wash did for me and I can't go on again; but for all that I am a great pet of Miss Minnie's. I tell her such pretty stories about a by-gone summer—stories of light and shade, dew-damps, and fireflies, and roses, and silences, and strange wild talks, all mingled in a wonderful web of silver thought. She calls me her fairy story, her mosaic dress, her jewel-box, I am made up of so many pretty pieces of remembrance."

"Ah, but she wears me still," laughed a delicate grenadine, crumpling up with delight and interrupting the muslin with a hidden sweep of light ruffles. "I am her prime favorite now. Oh, she and

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I took such a wonderful drive together in the sunset a while ago, and a walk in the magic gray of the twilight, and in myself I am a whole chapter of her life. You others may belong to her past, but I—I am her joyous, unended, never-to-be-ended present!"

"Ay, in truth, I belong to her past," softly murmured a blue wrapper from a crowded corner. "A past of sorrow as well as joy, illness as well as health; and were the truth told, I believe she holds me dearer than you all. For I have lain close to her heart when it throbbed with pain and unrest and bitter trouble. Tears have fallen over me, that have burned through into her soul. Sighs have been breathed over me, that else only God has heard. Yes, in the life-history we weave together, you tell of her gathered flowers, I of the thorns; you of her gladsome days, I of the sorrowful nights. I remind her of pain, of doubts, of dark sleepless hours, of mental distress and physical misery. It humbles her when she puts me on. I show her herself as she is in and of herself, apart from the deceiving glitter and false lights of the world. I am her lesson-book, and to wear me is for her to go into her soul's inmost sanctuary, to commune with herself and be still."

"And I," said a plain woolen dress, speaking unexpectedly out from under a rustling silken mass—"I am her work-book. Scorn me if you will, my radiant sisters. I am very plain, I know, very dark and unadorned. I tell her of no golden dreams, and bring no wondrous echoes of silvern days. I belong to her working hours only. You are many, and I am but one, and yet I live nearer to her than you all. I tell her with stern yet loving gravity of duties still to be fulfilled, of hard lessons yet to be mastered, of life questions yet to be wearied over and unriddled. I show her herself as she should be; not as a butterfly in the ball-room,

nor as a dreamer in still cathedral aisles; but as a patient worker on life's great highway. I recall to her little, daily recurring cares, wearisome responsibilities, and trivial, unglorified, unglorifying trials. But for me, she would be a worthless unit amid life's millions. I give her a place in the ranks of men, a place to keep here on earth, and a place to win in the great hereafter. I am her conscience. Surely I must go with her into eternity."

The dress ceased, and hung very still, waiting for its day of labor to come again, while the other dresses tittered and gossiped among themselves, repeating stories and telling tales of this and that, till, aweary of their own chatter, they too at last grew quiet. "To-morrow will write another page in our history," they said, and waited in silence.

"But to-morrow came and passed, and many to-morrows passed, and still none came to the wardrobe. Then at last the door opened again, and two women stood there, robed in heavy black.

No, there is nothing here that we may put on her now," said one of the women, and turned weeping away. "These all belong to her earthly life. How may we dress her for Heaven?"

"Through her earthly life only was she fitted for Heaven, tho nothing of it may follow her into the beyond," answered the other softly. "These robes she has laid aside forever with her mortality. Their life ends where hers begins. She has no need of them more. Come away."

And they closed the wardrobe door as one closes a finished book, and the dresses hung sad and speechless against the wall. They knew that they were suddenly become as a biography written in a forgotten tongue. To none living could they ever speak again. They were dresses only and no longer histories.

For Miss Minnie was dead.

SAN REMO, ITALY.

THE WIDE AWAKE

APRIL, 1888.

MASTER SHADOW.

Grace Dennis Litchfield

I'M afraid of my Shadow, it goes such a pace,
As if to rush forward and look in my face
If I turn the least bit; or when for a space

I take pains not to move,
Then that queer thing above
That is me, yet not me, grows so big on the wall