Mid-Lent in Paris.

MI-CAREME, or Mid Lent, is a great festival in Paris. It is celebrated by a carnival entirely organized by the students of the Latin Quarter. The great feature on this momentous occasion is a procession, the principal actors in which are students, and the employees of the lavoirs or wash-houses.

Let us imagine ourselves on Mi-Careme day, seated on a balcony of the Grand Hotel, from which we can obtain an excellent view of the Place de l'Opera, and also of the Grands Boulevards, down which the procession will pass. It is two o'clock. The procession will soon arrive. The circulation of carriages and vehicles of all sorts has been stopped so that the people, with whom the broad Boulevards and the Place are filled, walk through the middle of the thoroughfare without hindrance from or fear of horses. Many of that immense congregation are dressed in wildly fanciful costumes. Many more wear huge, deformed, pasteboard noses or fantastic beards. All are in the best of spirits, laughing, shouting, jesting with every one. All are armed with confetti, little bits of colored paper which are thrown in the face of the nearest neighbor. Battles, in which confetti are the missiles used, are raging everywhere, and clouds of brilliantly colored paper are flying over the heads of the combatants.

Just opposite us are the rooms of the "Jockey Club," whose members are at their windows emptying the whole contents of large canvas bags of confetti upon those below. The effect of these showers is extremely pretty. The bits of paper fall slowly toward the mass of heads beneath with a flitting motion, the white ones reflecting the rays of the sun in their descent. The trees of the Boulevards, as far as the eye can see, are covered with long colored paper ribbons, the ends of which float gently to and fro. These ribbons or serpentins are wound in flat coils and are thrown in the air, one end of the coil being held by the thrower. They are now being freely used from all the windows round us. In every direction coils are flying, leaving a long tail of unrolled paper behind them.

Suddenly we hear a great cry from those on the boulevard, "Les voilà, les voilà!" They have just caught sight of the procession coming along the Grand Boulevards. In a few moments a body of police force themselves through the center of the crowd, pushing the people toward the sidewalks. The police are followed by a detachment of mounted Republican Guards, who effectually clear the road of any unfortunate person who may have escaped the shoves of the policemen.

After an interval of a hundred yards or so, during which a few Republican Guards gallop up and down the edges of the cleared space in order to keep the people back, another body of horsemen appears. These cavaliers are dressed in the gorgeous costume of musketeers. Any one of them might be taken for one of the heroes of Dumas's novel,—Porthos, Athos, Aramis, or d'Artagnan. A medley of students comes next. They are disguised as crocodiles, monkeys, horses—as every animal imaginable or unimaginable. Now the great cars, or chariots—the chars—begin to appear. Each char is organized by a wash-house. It usually takes the form of a pyramid, gayly decorated, with rows of seats all the way up. At the top is seated the "queen" of the car, and near her is the king. On their heads are magnificent, bejeweled crowns of gold,—the gold being pasteboard, the jewels glass. The occupants of the char throw confetti and serpentins galore to the mass of onlookers on each side, which are often mixed with kisses by the pretty laundresses, all of which, confetti, serpentins, kisses, are returned with interest by frivolous youths resembling ourselves.

After a considerable number of these chars have passed, another great shout is given by the crowd on the Boulevard. "Voilà la reine des reines!" they cry,—"Here comes the