

The largest of the hotels, the St. Charles, being full, we obtained agreeable apartments at the St. Louis, in a part of the town where we heard French constantly spoken. Our rooms were fitted up in the French style, with muslin curtains and scarlet draperies. There was a finely-proportioned drawing-room, furnished à la Louis Quatorze, opening into a large dining-room with sliding doors, where the boarders and the "transient visitors," as they are called in the United States, met at meals. The mistress of the hotel, a widow, presided at dinner, and we talked French with her and some of the attendants; but most of the servants of the house were Irish or German. There was a beautiful ball-room, in which preparations were making for a grand masked ball, to be given the night after our arrival.

It was the last day of the Carnival. From the time we landed in New England to this hour, we seemed to have been in a country where all, whether rich or poor, were laboring from morning till night, without ever indulging in a holiday. I had sometimes thought that the national motto should be, "All work and no play." It was quite a novelty and a refreshing sight to see a whole population giving up their minds for a short season to amusement. There was a grand procession parading the streets, almost every one dressed in the most grotesque attire, troops of them on horseback, some in open carriages, with bands of music, and in a variety of costumes,—some as Indians, with feathers in their heads, and one, a jolly fat man, as Mardi Gras himself. All wore masks, and here and there in the crowd, or stationed in a balcony above, we saw persons armed with bags of flour, which they showered down copiously on any one who seemed particularly proud of his attire. The strangeness of the scene was not a little heightened by the blending of negroes, quadroons, and mulattoes in the crowd; and we were amused by observing the ludicrous surprise, mixed with contempt, of several unmasked, stiff, grave Anglo-Americans from the north, who were witnessing for the first time what seemed to them so much mummery and tom-foolery. One wagoner, coming out of a cross street, in his working-dress, drove his team of horses and vehicle heavily laden with cotton bales right through the proces-