The Tonquinese in their visits and entertainments are very ceremonious. The person who pays the visit stops at the gate, and gives the porter certain loose leaves of paper, containing eight or ten pages, in which are written in large characters his name and titles, together with the intention of his visit. These leaves are of different forts and colours, according to the rank and quality of the person to be visited. If the master of the house is absent, the paper is left with the porter, and the visit is considered as concluded. A magistrate, when he pays a visit, must be clothed in a robe of ceremony proper to his employment; and those who have some distinction, though they hold no public office, have also particular visiting dresses; and they cannot dispense with the use of them, without transgressing the established rules of civility.

The person visited receives at the door the person who pays the visit: they join hands when they accost one another, and, by their gestures alone, shew a thousand marks of politeness. The master of the house invites his visitor to enter, by pointing to the door; the person who pays the visit, as soon as seated, again tells the motive which brought him thither: the master of the house listens with much gravity, and from time to time inclines his body, according to the rules of politeness. Servants afterwards, clothed in dresses of ceremony, bring a triangular table, upon which are placed cups of tea, together with boxes of betel, pipes and tobacco.

When the visit is ended, the master of the house re-conducts his guest to the middle of the street, where renew their reverences, bows, elevation of hands, and other compliments: when the stranger is departed, and already advanced, a good way, the matter of the house lends a footman after him to pay him a fresh compliment; and some time after the visitor, in his turn, sends back another to thank him, which terminates the visit.

It is not only in visits that this troublesome politeness is displayed; but in all their actions which have any relation to society. The Tonquinese, in eating, instead of forks, use small flicks made of ebony or ivory, with the extremities ornamented with gold or silver: they never touch any food with their fingers; and, when at table, they appear to eat in unison; the motion of their hands and jawbones seeming to depend upon some particular rules. They never use napkins, nor are their tables covered with a cloth; they are only surrounded with long embroidered carpets, which hang down to the floor. Every person has a table for himself, unless too great a number of guests obliges two to fit together.

The person who invites to an entertainment, sends, the evening before, to his intended guests, a few leaves of invitation, in which is contained a kind of bill of fare.

On the day appointed for the entertainment, he sends early in the morning a paper like the former, to remind the guests of their invitation; and when the hour of repast approaches, he sends a third paper, with a servant to conduct them, and to acquaint them how impatient he is to see them; when the company are assembled, and are about to sit down to table, the master of the house takes a cup of gold or silver, and, lifting it up with both hands, salutes the person of the greatest rank on account of his employment: he then proceeds to the outer court, where, after having turned himself towards the south, and offered wine to the tutelary spirits who preside over the house, he pours it out in form of a libation. After this ceremony, every one approaches the table destined for him, but before they sit down they waste above an hour in paying compliments; and the matter of the house has no sooner done with one, than he begins with another.—When they have occasion to drink, compliments begin afresh: they drink a great deal, but slowly, and at several times; and when they begin to grow merry, discuss various topics; and sometimes play at small games, in which those who lose are condemned to drink.

Comedies and forces are often represented during these repasts; but they are always intermixed with the most wretched and frightful music. The actors in these domestic comedies are boys between the age of twelve and fifteen, who, like European strollers, go from province to province, and are every where considered as the dregs of the people. They have, however, most astonishing memories; they carry their theatrical apparatus along with them, together with a volume containing their comedies, generally to the amount of forty or fifty, which they present; and when a piece is fixed on, they immediately perform it, without any preparation.

About the middle of the entertainment one of the performers goes round to all the tables, and begs of the guests; the servants of the house do the fame, and carry to their matters whatever money they receive: a new repast is then displayed before the company, which is destined for their domestics.

The end of these entertainments is generally suited to the beginning. The guests praise *in detail* the excellence of the dishes and the politeness and generosity of their host, who, on his part, makes a number of excuses, and begs pardon, with many low bows, for not having treated them according to their merit.