

## The Public Journals.

### A WEDDING FETE.

#### *A Sicilian Fact.*

I was invited to a wedding fête by the Marquis of P——, on occasion of the marriage of his sister. The entertainment was splendid, and the palace fitted up in a sumptuous style. We ascended the staircase through a double file of servants, at least fifty in number, many of them, I suspect, hired or borrowed for the occasion, but they were all in the same gay livery, and impressed one with a suitable idea of the importance of the proprietor of the mansion.

On being ushered into a magnificent saloon, with rich crimson hangings, we found the bride superbly attired and adorned with a profusion of jewels, surrounded by her female relatives, in attendance to receive the homage and congratulations of the company. The ball was led off by the newly-married couple. After dancing some time, supper was announced, and here joking seemed the order of the evening.

The supper was elegant and inviting in appearance, but what in English would be termed a hoax. Not a dish but what had its trick; one exploded on the application of the knife, another suddenly took fire as we were about to help ourselves; whilst a lady, who was laughing heartily at the sight, stretching out her hand to take a fine peach, suddenly changed her note on disturbing a lizard, which had been nestling among the leaves. In the middle of the table was an immense pasty which appeared smoking hot and diffused so inviting a smell, that there was no suspecting deceit; the crust was lifted up in order to commence the attack, when a flight of small birds burst forth at once to the astonishment of the carver.

I was sorry to observe that some of the tricks were far from humane. At the top and bottom was a fine fowl properly served with suitable sauce, all apparently as it ought to have been; some one requested to be helped to a part, but no sooner was the fork thrust in than the poor animal uttering a cry, leapt off the dish, and in its struggles to escape, liberally bestowed a portion of the sauce on those in its way: the same took place at the other end. The cruelty here practised deserves the severest censure, and cannot fail to alloy the pleasure which a sensible mind might otherwise have derived from the festivities of the evening. The unfortunate bird is first plucked, then stupified with opium, whilst the highly coloured sauce, poured over, gives it the appearance of being dressed. When the different jokes, if they all may be termed so, had been played off, the pseudo eatables were taken away, and a real and excellent supper brought in to replace them.

But the deceptions did not end here. After supper we were shown into another apartment. We had scarcely entered it, when surprise and consternation seized the whole company. Every one was alarmed to see his neighbour's face assume a yellow, cadaverous aspect, so that we all looked like so many walking corpses. The ladies, lately so gay and blooming, were particularly shocked at their transformation, and each anxiously inquired if she looked so ill and ugly as her companions.

The bride and bridegroom had fortunately escaped this trial, having retired after supper; but our laughter-loving host had not yet finished his operations. From this room he led us into another, the walls and ceiling of which appeared covered with reptiles and insects of various descriptions. Vipers, toads, centipedes, tarantulas, and scorpions, seemed crawling about in every direction, forming a spectacle so revolting and alarming that I could not forbear shuddering. It was too much for the ladies, who, without waiting to be squired, instantly made the best of their way back to the ball-room, where they soon forgot their fears, and continued to divert themselves until a late hour.

The two latter deceptions are uncommonly ingenious, and I believe very little known. The last is mentioned by Smollett, in *Peregrine Pickle*, as having alarmed the honest Morgan, and made him take the operator for a conjuror. The marquis promised to procure for me the secret of these spells, but as I never got them, I presume the professor was unwilling to communicate them.

The first was evidently in a great degree effected by the preparation of the candles, which emitted a thick smoke, and gave a dull, heavy light. On our entering the room where the latter appearances took place, a servant preceded us with a large braciere, or pan of burning charcoal, which also threw up a dense smoke, and spread a strong and rather unpleasant odour through the apartment. The forms of the reptiles must of course, in some manner, be thrown on the walls; and I suppose the composition burnt in the braciere affects and disorders the senses in such a manner as to give the appearance of life and motion.—*Metropolitan.*

### THE UNGRATEFUL MAN.

(*A Story of the Middle Ages. From a work of Massenius, a German Jesuit, published at Cologne, in 1657.*)

VITALIS, a noble Venetian, one day, at a hunting party, fell into a pit, which had been dug to catch wild animals. He passed a whole night and day there, and I will leave you to imagine his dread and his agony. The pit was dark. Vitalis ran from the one side of it to the other, in the hope of finding some branch or root by which he might climb its

sides, and get out of his dungeon; but he heard such confused and extraordinary noises, growlings, hissings, and plaintive cries, that he became half dead with terror, and crouched in a corner motionless, awaiting death with the most horrid dismay. On the morning of the second day he heard some one passing near the pit, and then raising his voice, he cried out with the most dolorous accent, "Help, help! draw me out of this; I am perishing!"

A peasant crossing the forest heard his cry. At first he was frightened; but after a moment or two, taking courage, he approached the pit and asked who had called.

"A poor huntsman," answered Vitalis, "who has passed a long night and day here. Help me out, for the love of God. Help me out, and I will recompense you handsomely."

"I will do what I can," replied the peasant.

Then Massaccio (such was the name of the peasant) took a hedge-bill which hung at his girdle, and cutting a branch of a tree strong enough to bear a man,—“Listen, huntsman,” said he, “to what I am going to say to you. I will let down this branch into the pit. I will fasten it against the sides, and hold it with my hands; and by pulling yourself out by it, you may get free from your prison.”

“Good,” answered Vitalis, “ask me any thing you will, and it shall be granted.”

“I ask for nothing,” said the peasant, “but I am going to be married, and you may give what you like to my bride.”

So saying, Massaccio let down the branch—he soon felt it heavy, and a moment after a monkey leapt merrily out of the pit. He had fallen like Vitalis, and had seized quickly on the branch of Massaccio. “It was the devil, surely, which spoke to me from the pit,” said Massaccio, running away in affright.

“Do you abandon me, then?” cried Vitalis, in a lamentable accent; “my friend, my dear friend, for the love of the Lord, for the love of your mistress, draw me out of this; I beg, I implore you; I will give her wedding gifts, I will enrich you. I am the Lord Vitalis, a rich Venetian; do not let me die of hunger in this horrible pit.”

Massaccio was touched by these prayers. He returned to the pit—let down another branch, and a lion jumped out, making the woods echo with a roar of delight.

“Oh certainly, certainly, it was the devil I heard,” said Massaccio, and fled away again; but stopping short, after a few paces, he heard again the piercing cries of Vitalis.

“Oh God, oh God,” cried he, “to die of hunger in a pit. Will no one then come to my help? Whoever you may be, I implore you return; let me not die, when you can save me. I will give you a house and field,

and cows, and gold, all that you can ask for; save me, save me only.”

Massaccio, thus implored, could not help returning. He let down the branch, and a serpent, hissing joyously, sprang out of the pit. Massaccio fell on his knees, half dead with fear, and repeated all the prayers he could think of to drive away the demon. He was only brought to himself by hearing the cries of despair which Vitalis uttered.

“Will no one help me?” said he. “Ah then, I must die. Oh God, oh God!” and he wept and sobbed in a heartbreaking manner.

“It is certainly the voice of a man for all that,” said Massaccio.

“Oh, if you are still there,” said Vitalis, “in the name of all that is dear to you, save me, that I may die at least at home, and not in this horrible pit. I can say no more; my voice is exhausted. Shall I give you my palace at Venice, my possessions, my honours; I give them all; and may I die here if I forfeit my word. Life, life only; save only my life.”

Massaccio could not resist such prayers, mingled with such promises. He let down the branch again.

“Ah, here you are at last,” said he, seeing Vitalis come up.

“Yes,” said he, and uttering a cry of joy, he fainted in the arms of Massaccio.

Massaccio sustained, assisted him, and brought him to himself; then, giving him his arm, “Let us,” said he, “quit this forest;” but Vitalis could hardly walk,—he was exhausted with hunger.

“Eat this piece of bread,” said Massaccio, and he gave him some which he took out of his wallet.

“My benefactor, my saviour, my good angel,” said Vitalis, “how can I ever sufficiently recompense you?”

“You have promised me a marriage portion for my bride, and your palace at Venice for myself,” said Massaccio. But Vitalis now began to regain his strength.

“Yes, certainly, I will give a portion to your wife, my dear Massaccio, and I will make you the richest peasant of your village. Where do you live?”

“At Capalatta in the forest; but I would willingly quit my village to establish myself at Venice in the palace you have promised me.”

“Here we are out of the forest,” said Vitalis; “I know my road now; thank you, Massaccio.”

“But when shall I come for my palace and the portion of my intended?” returned the peasant.

“When you will,” said the other, and they separated.

Vitalis went to Venice, and Massaccio to Capalatta, where he related his adventure to his mistress, telling her what a rich portion

she was to have, and what a fine palace she was to live in.

The next day early he set out for Venice, and asked for the palace of the Signor Vitalis, —went straight to it, and told the domestics that he should come shortly with his mistress, in a fine carriage, to take possession of the palace which the Signor Vitalis had promised to give him. Massaccio appeared to those who heard him mad, and Vitalis was told that there was a peasant in his hall, who asked for a marriage portion, and said the palace belonged to him.

“Let him be turned out immediately,” said Vitalis; “I know him not.”

The valets accordingly drove him away with insults, and Massaccio returned to his cottage in despair, without daring to see his mistress. At one corner of his fireplace was seated the monkey, at the other corner the lion, and the serpent had twisted itself in spiral circles upon the hearth. Massaccio was seized with fear. “The man has driven me from his door,” thought he; “the lion will certainly devour me, the serpent sting me, and the monkey laugh at me; and this will be my reward for saving them from the pit.” But the monkey turned to him with a most amicable grimace; the lion, vibrating gently his tail, came and licked his hand, like a dog caressing his master; and the serpent, unrolling its ringy body, moved about the room with a contented and grateful air, which gave courage to Massaccio.

“Poor animals!” said he, “they are better than the Signor Vitalis; he drove me like a beggar from the door. Ah! with what pleasure I would pitch him again into the pit. And my bride! whom I thought to marry so magnificently! I have not a stick of wood in my wood-house, not a morsel of meat for a meal, and no money to buy any. The ungrateful wretch, with his portion and his palace!”

Thus did Massaccio complain. Meanwhile the monkey began to make significant faces, the lion to agitate his tail with great uneasiness, and the serpent to roll and unroll its circles with great rapidity. Then the monkey, approaching his benefactor, made him a sign to follow, and led him into the wood-house, where was regularly piled up a quantity of wood sufficient for the whole year. It was the monkey who had collected this wood in the forest, and brought it to the cottage of Massaccio. Massaccio embraced the grateful ape. The lion then uttering a delicate roar, led him to a corner of the cottage where he saw an enormous provision of game, two sheep, three kids, hares and rabbits in abundance, and a fine wild boar, all covered with the branches of trees to keep them fresh. It was the lion who had hunted for his benefactor. Massaccio patted kindly his mane. “And you then,” said he to the

serpent, “have you brought me nothing? Art thou a Vitalis, or a good and honest animal like the monkey and the lion?” The serpent glided rapidly under a heap of dried leaves, and re-appeared immediately, rearing itself superbly on its tail, when Massaccio saw, with surprise, a beautiful diamond in its mouth. “A diamond!” cried Massaccio, and stretched forth his hand to stroke caressingly the serpent and take its offering.

Massaccio then set out immediately for Venice to turn his diamond into money. He addressed himself to a jeweller. The jeweller examined the diamond; it was of the finest water.

“How much do you ask for it,” said he.

“Two hundred crowns,” said Massaccio, thinking his demand to be great; it was hardly the tenth part of the value of the stone. The jeweller looked at Massaccio, and said, “To sell it at that price you must be a robber, and I arrest you!”

“If it is not worth so much, give me less,” said Massaccio; “I am not a robber, I am an honest man; it was the serpent who gave me the diamond.”

But the police now arrived and conducted him before the magistrate. There he recounted his adventure, which appeared to be a mere fairy vision. Yet as the Signor Vitalis was implicated in the story, the magistrate referred the affair to the state inquisition, and Massaccio appeared before it.

“Relate to us your history,” said one of the inquisitors, “and lie not, or we will have you thrown into the canal.”

Massaccio related his adventure.

“So,” said the inquisitor, “you saved the Signor Vitalis?”

“Yes, noble signors.”

“And he promised you a marriage portion for your bride, and his palace at Venice for yourself?”

“Yes, noble signors.”

“And he drove you like a beggar from his door?”

“Yes, noble signors.”

“Let the Signor Vitalis appear,” said the same inquisitor.—Vitalis appeared.

“Do you know this man, Signor Vitalis,” said the inquisitor.

“No, I know him not,” replied Vitalis.

The inquisitors consulted together. “This man,” said they, speaking of Massaccio, “is evidently a knave and a cheat; he must be thrown into prison. Signor Vitalis, you are acquitted.” Then, making a sign to an officer of police, “Take that man,” said he, “to prison.”

Massaccio fell on his knees in the middle of the hall. “Noble signors, noble signors,” said he, “it is possible that the diamond may have been stolen; the serpent who gave it me may have wished to deceive me. It is possible that the ape, the lion, and the ser-

pent may all be an illusion of the demon, but it is true that I saved the Signor Vitalis. Signor Vitalis," (turning to him,) "I ask you not for the marriage portion for my bride, nor for your palace of marble, but say a word for me; suffer me not to be thrown into prison; do not abandon me; I did not abandon you when you were in the pit."

"Noble signors," said Vitalis, bowing to the tribunal, "I can only repeat what I have already said: I know not this man. Has he a single witness to produce?"

At this moment the whole court was thrown into fear and astonishment, for the lion, the monkey, and the serpent, entered the hall together. The monkey was mounted on the back of the lion, and the serpent was twined round the arm of the monkey. On entering, the lion roared, the monkey sputtered, and the serpent hissed.

"Ah! these are the animals of the pit," cried Vitalis, in alarm.

"Signor Vitalis," resumed the chief of the inquisitors, when the dismay which this apparition had caused had somewhat diminished, "you have asked where were the witnesses of Massaccio? You see that God has sent them at the right time before the bar of our tribunal. Since, then, God has testified against you, we should be culpable before him if we did not punish your ingratitude. Your palace and your possessions are confiscated, and you shall pass the rest of your life in a narrow prison. And you," continued he, addressing himself to Massaccio, who was all this time caressing the lion, the monkey, and the serpent, "since a Venetian had promised you a palace of marble, and a portion for your bride, the republic of Venice will accomplish the promise; the palace and possessions of Vitalis are thine. You," said he to the secretary of the tribunal, "draw up an account of all this history, that the people of Venice may know, through all generations, that the justice of the tribunal of the state inquisition is not less equitable than it is rigorous."

Massaccio and his wife lived happily for many years afterwards in the palace of Vitalis with the monkey, the lion, and the serpent; and Massaccio had them represented in a picture, on the wall of his palace, as they entered the hall of the tribunal, the lion carrying the monkey, and the monkey carrying the serpent.—*Blackwood's Magazine.*

#### THE MORISTAN OF CAIRO.

*By a recent Visitor.*

THE *Moristan*, or mad-house of Cairo, is placed near the centre of the town, not far distant from the assemblage of bazaars, which, under the name of *Khan Khalil*, forms the principal mart of trade and the vanity fair of that crowded city. Viewed

from the street, the edifice seems of considerable extent, and, at the period of my visit, its exterior had recently been ornamented in the best style of Arab art,—in other words, had been coloured from base to pinnacle with alternate stripes of red and white. The interior of the mosque, which occupies a large portion of the building, and is a favourite resort of numerous devotees, had also shared in the decorations, on which large sums had been lavished. The exterior display, the interior embellishments, though tawdry, as is usual in the mosques of Cairo, induced me to augur favourably of the establishment I was visiting, when, following my Arab guide down a dark passage, I was introduced to that portion of the building which is intended to be an asylum for the insane. This is a small open quadrangular court, having in its centre a stone reservoir half filled with dirty water, called a fountain. Around the court are a dozen *iron-grated cages*, precisely such as would be employed for the confinement of wild beasts in a menagery. In each was a wretched animal, presenting a human form, but chained by the neck to the wall of his cell. Several were entirely naked, others but scantily covered with dirty rags; a few had pieces of old matting to lie upon, but the majority were wallowing in their own filth. At our approach some assumed their frantic gestures, and burst forth in incoherent menaces; but the greater number seemed dead to all but animal instincts, and took no other notice of us than to call loudly and vehemently—"Esh, esh! moyeh, moyeh!"—bread, bread! water, water! We had brought the former, and the latter, though not the purest imaginable, was at hand; cake after cake was snatched and devoured with all the greediness of half-starved animals—cup after cup seemed scarcely to assuage their neglected thirst. So far as I could learn, no treatment, medical or moral, is applied to these miserable patients: pipes are their only relief; and were it not for the charity of curious, and occasionally superstitious, visitors, the inmates of the *Moristan* would of necessity perish.—*Athenæum.*

#### The Gatherer.

*Masques.*—In Jonson's *Masque of Blackness*, the Queen, and the Ladies Suffolk, Derby, Effingham, Herbert, &c., personated the parts of Moors, and had, as we are informed by Sir Dudley Carleton, "their faces and arms, up to the elbows, painted black." In the *Masque of Oberon*, Sir John Finnet tells us, "the little Duke Charles was still to be found in the midst of the fairy dancers." *The Hue and Cry after Cupid*, as performed at Lord Haddington's marriage, in 1608, transcended in expensiveness even the ever-memorable fête at Boyle Farm, in 1827,