

**Alphonse de Lamartine: A pilgrimage to the Holy land; comprising recollections, sketches, and reflections, made during a tour in the East. (1835)**

P31

The Maronites are subject to the emir Beschir and form with the Druses and Metoualis, a sort of despotic consideration under the government of that Emir. Although the members of these three nations differ in origin, in religion and in manners and are scarcely ever confounded in the same villages, the interest of defending their common liberty and the vigorous politic sway of the Emir Beschir retains them under a single sceptre. Their numerous habitations cover the space comprehended between Latakia and St John d'acre on one side and Damascus and Bayreut on the other. (...)

The Maronites occupy the most central valleys and most elevated ridges of the principal group of Lebanon from the environs of Byreut to Syrian Tripoli. The slopes of these mountains towards the sea are fertile and watered by numerous streams of never failing cascades. They produce silk, oil, barley and wheat; the heights are almost inaccessible and the flanks of the mountains are in all parts pierced by the naked rock: but the indefatigable activity of this people, to whose religion those peaks and precipices offer the only secure asylum has reduced even the rock to fertility....

P. 155

The Emir Beschir is himself a Christian and even a Catholic: or, rather, he is a type of the law in all countries professing a tolerating creed: he belongs to every official form of worship prevailing in his dominions - is a Mussulman towards Mussulmans, a Druse towards the Druses a Christian towards Christians. His palace contains mosques as well as a church; but for some years past, his domestic religion, the religion of the heart, is Catholicism. His policy is such, and the terror of his name so well established that his profession of the Christian faith neither inspires terror nor mistrust in the Mussulman Arabs, the Druses or the Metoualis who live under his sway. He administers justice to all and all alike respect him. (...)

There was then amongst the Emir's secretaries one of the greatest poets of Arabia, though I was only afterwards apprised of it. When he learned from other Syrian Arabs that I was myself a European poet, he addressed verses to me which bore, as usual with them, that impress of affectation and study, and exhibited that false play upon words which characterize all decay ing languages and nations, but which are nevertheless stamped with a loftiness of talents and ideas far superior to what Europeans can imagine

P156

I beheld, at day-break, through the gratings, several Musulmans at their prayers in the large court of the palace. They spread a carpet upon the ground to protect them from the dust, remained standing for a moment, then stretched themselves at full length, repeatedly touching the carpet

with their foreheads, and always turning their faces towards the mosque; they afterwards lay down at full length with their faces to the carpet, again striking the ground with their foreheads, rose up, and frequently went over the same ceremonies, resuming the same attitudes, and muttering their prayers. I never could observe the slightest ridicule in those attitudes and ceremonies, however strange they appear to our ignorance. The physiognomy of Musulmans is so penetrated with the religious sentiment they express through these gestures, that I have always entertained the highest respect for their mode of praying; everything is sanctified by the motive. Whenever the idea of the divinity enters into and acts upon the heart of man. It imprints a superhuman dignity upon him. The following is the language that suggests itself on the occasion:

-

“I worship not like thee but with thee, the common Lord of all, the Lord in whom thou bilievest, whom thou desirest to acknowledge and to honor, as I desire to acknowledge and honor him, in another manner. It ill becomes me to turn thee into ridicule – it behoves God alone to judge between us.”

Lamartine, Alphonse de, 1790-1869. English (no translator credited) New York, D. Appleton & company, 1848

**Damascus and Palmyra: a journey to the East, with a sketch of the state and prospects of  
Syria under Ibrahim Pasha.  
by Charles G. Addison of the inner temple (1838)**

P. 19

The' irregular buildings and domes, the courts, arcades, and pointed arches of the palace, suddenly broke upon the eye from their commanding situation with the greatest effect.

We entered a wide quadrangle paved with marble, cooled by a large fountain, and surrounded by buildings and courts, bordered by arcades and porticos. Attendants in rich dresses and richly caparisoned Arab horses were standing about. After delivering our letter and waiting a short time, we were conducted up a staircase to an open corridor or verandah, supported by slight painted columns and ornamented with arabesque paintings and lattice work, and were shortly introduced by some gaily dressed attendants through an antechamber, into a long saloon paved with marble and surrounded by rich figured divans. The floor of the upper part of the room was raised and covered with rich carpets, and at the end, on a handsome divan, sat the Emir. The lower portion of the apartment was filled with officers and attendants in flowing oriental dresses.

P. 20

A more patriarchal, venerable, and majestic figure than the Emir Beshir can scarcely be imagined. He is a fine old man, near ninety years of age, with long white whiskers flowing down on each side of his face, and terminating in a snow white beard of great length. His air and manner were most princely and court-like ; placing his hand on his breast he bent to us all round, and requested us to be seated.(....) A more strikingly oriental scene can scarcely be imagined, — the walls of the saloon were ornamented with paintings in arabesque, and in the corners of the apartment rills of water trickled down from marble fountains. Officers of the household, in light blue dresses, girt with scimitars; attendants in different rich costumes, with daggers and poignards stuck in their belts; and secretaries in long robes, with silver writing materials in their girdles, and paper in the little pockets of their vests, were grouped together in the lower part of the room, the raised part being appropriated solely for the Emir and his friends. It was a scene of great interest, — there was a kind, fatherly manner, and a calm, settled dignity about the Emir which astonished us, and must have been sadly at variance with his real feelings at this time, lying as he was at the mercy of Ibrahim Pasha. (...) The Emir was handsomely attired in a rich robe edged with sable, his waist was girt, with a Cashmere shawl, in which stuck a dagger covered with diamonds, and his fingers were clothed with rings. In his hand he held a long pipe, the bowl of which rested\* on the carpet, and the large amber-headed mouth piece was covered with jewels. The Emir is celebrated for the number and magnificence of his pipes.

P22

The princely air and the venerable figure of this old patriarch, riveted our gaze the whole time we remained. The chief, and almost the only topic of conversation was Sir Sidney Smith, with whom the Emir was very intimate when Sir Sidney was stationed off this coast during the war; he calls him a good man, a very fine fellow, and appears greatly to admire him. On one side of the large quadrangle are the apartments of the Emir, and his harem, to which there is a smaller private court, paved with marble and cooled with fountains. On the two other sides are small detached buildings and courts for his retainers and officers of the household; and towards Deir el Kammar the quadrangle is open to the country, being merely bounded by a low wall ; thus affording a view of the valley, and a lovely peep of the sea between the mountains. Proceeding to the stables, we saw some highly esteemed Arab horses, with flowing manes and tails, for which we were told the Emir would take no price. There were some small grey horses of exquisite symmetry, which were admired greatly by the whole party. They are remarkably docile, free from vice, and playful as kittens.

P26

Were we asked to point out the finest specimen of an old man, and the most perfect gentleman in address, it would be the Emir Beshir. If natural ease, and dignity of manner, distinguish the address of a gentleman, modern aspirants to fashion in Europe would do well to come and study the bearing and carriage of these Easterns.

P31

it is said that the Emir Beshir caused himself to be baptized, to attach the Maronites more firmly to his authority. It is averred that the Emir is Christian, and that his wife has been baptized, although he preserves the outward forms of Mahometanism. He appears somewhat like the conscientious Druses, Maronite today and Turk to-morrow.

P32

....The humble nation of the Maronites has survived the empire of Constantinople, and they still enjoy under their Turkish masters a free religion and a mitigated servitude. Their domestic governors are chosen among the ancient nobility. The Patriarch in his monastery of Canobin, still fancies himself on the throne of Antioch ; nine bishops compose his synod, and one hundred and fifty priests, who retain the liberty of marriage, are intrusted with the care of 1 00,000 souls. Their country extends from the ridge of Mount Libanus to the shores of Tripoli, and the gradual descent affords in a narrow space each variety of soil and climate, from the holy cedars, erect under the weight of snow, to the vine, the mulberry, and the olive-trees of the fruitful valley."

These Maronites inhabit the most elevated part of the range of Lebanon, from Beirout northwards to Tripoli, and numerous monasteries are scattered over the mountains in lonely and picturesque situations, some elevated even to the borders of almost eternal snow. Around their scattered villages, the soil washed down by the mountain torrents is preserved in terraces, formed along steep precipitous descents, and presents an industrious and careful cultivation, strongly contrasting with the neglected state of the rich plain between Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon. . All questions of a religious nature are decided by a patriarch, elected by the bishops and confirmed by the Pope, who has a legate residing at the monastery of Kanobin. All civil matters are carried before the Emir Beshir.

P.34

The next considerable sect to the Maronites and Druses inhabiting the range of Lebanon, are the Metualies of the Shite sect of Mahometans, i. e. followers of Ali, the sect dominant in Persia.

P.15

The Druses are a most extraordinary people, their real religion, if they have one, remains a mystery ; though, from all I can hear, it should seem that they have no creed at all. They are everything as it suits their convenience, Christians among Christians, and Mussulmen among Mussulmen. They here consequently mostly profess Mahometanism, although in private they are said to break through all the rules of the Koran, feast when they ought to fast, and even eat hog's flesh. Those living among the Maronites or any Christian sect of the mountains, send their children to be educated with the Christian children, and attend the Christian place of worship without believing in the Christian doctrine. Their morality is as questionable as their religion.