

A divan ran round the room, on which were seated the Sheikh and his brother the Hajji (or pilgrim, a title taken by all Musulmans who have made the journey to Mecca): both had gentle good-natured faces. Coffee, pipes and sorbets were served. Besides the divan on which we were seated the room had no other furniture than a fine closely woven mat covering the floor: on the walls and ceiling were verses of the Qoran written in Turkish. We talked a little; the Hajji told us some details of his visit to Mecca, which he made in the year in which nearly the whole caravan perished from cholera. We took our leave, apparently well pleased with one another. The Sheikh then begged me to come to his harem, to see some sick ladies. The room into which I was led was much like that in which he had received us, but the windows were closely grated, making it very dark. The lady most gravely ill lay on a divan, her face unveiled. She was about twenty or twenty-two, with a round pale face, and appeared to be prostrated with weariness and pain. The other invalid who consulted me was standing and also unveiled. She was older than the first. Both were dressed in white, two female slaves stood by the door. That look of puffiness and fever which I had observed in the men was still more evident in the women. I was impressed throughout with the sadness and monotony of their life.

After examining carefully the two invalids without speaking to them—talk would have been useless, for I could neither understand them nor they me—I retired. Outside I explained to the husband through our interpreter what they had to do. I hope my remedies were effectual, I have heard nothing more of the ladies.

The next day the Sheikh came to return M. de Lamartine's visit. This single fact is enough to show how manners have changed in this country, since a Turk, who was also a priest, dared in the daytime to return a visit and enter a Christian's house by way of compliment. Fifty years ago the thing could not have happened. The island then is getting civilized; but will it be happier or stronger than when its faith was alive, and the manners in conformity with that faith? I cannot say, but now that it has lost what made its strength it must change still more or perish.

We embarked at Larnaca for the last time before we reached the continent of Asia; my longings grew warmer as I approached that Holy Land, and my eyes never left the heights of the Lebanon which now came into view. We left Cyprus with joy, and after a four days' sail, now over a smooth sea, now with a light breeze, we reached Beirut.