

the high seas and again towards evening, when with tired wings, like great wounded birds, they come home to the nest.

The society of Magdala is not numerous but sufficiently choice. None of their customs are too austere. The pleasures of Rome are lacking, obviously, and it is always with a sigh that we recall the Forum, the Field of Mars, the Baths, the Theatres and the Circus. But the pleasures of our over-refined civilization had absorbed me too much, so here I am happy to regain possession of myself. In this Oriental atmosphere, which the breath of the desert renews unceasingly, I once more become free. This country and this people interest me strangely in other respects. They are much older than Rome, and, notwithstanding this, I find them very much younger.

Civilization has aged us before our time. We have had barely seven or eight centuries of existence, while the Jewish people have had twice as many. In spite of this, their faith, their beliefs, are still vigorous, whilst our own are flickering and will soon die out.

Here the population seems gifted with eternal youth, like the nature which surrounds it. Why should it become old? Its inland sea, its sky, its mountains, its forest, its sacred stream the Jordan, remain always unchanged, and, above all, it has been able to retain, together with the candor, the naiveté, and the illusions of childhood, the invincible hope of a great future.

What has been happening here for more than a year is proof of it. One hears on all sides of nothing but preaching and prophecies concerning a Messiah