

Ilya Ehrenburg

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*Julio Jurenito*

TRANSLATED BY

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IN COLLABORATION WITH

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## Introduction

IT IS WITH THE GREATEST EMOTION that I approach a task which I regard as the goal and justification of my paltry life: to relate the life and thoughts of my Teacher, Julio Jurenito. Overwhelmed by the kaleidoscopic abundance of pitiful efforts on the part of a certain World Chronicler, now creating the history books of the future, my memory has become confused and senile; this process has been assisted, moreover, by the food shortage in Russia, particularly the lack of fats. The thought that many of the Teacher's judgments and stories are forever lost to me and the world fills me with dismay. But his image is vivid and alive. He stands before me, thin and frenzied, wearing his orange waistcoat and that unforgettable tie with green dots, smiling tranquilly. Teacher, I shall not betray you!

Sometimes, by sheer force of inertia, I still write poems of mediocre worth. When asked what my profession is, I shamelessly reply, 'a writer'. But all that belongs to the sphere of practical, everyday affairs: in substance, I have long since ceased to love and have abandoned that unproductive pastime. It would be most painful to me if anyone were to regard this book as a novel possessing greater or lesser entertainment value. That would mean that I had failed to carry out the task entrusted to me on that dark day of March 12th, 1921, the day of the Teacher's death. May my words be warm like his hairy hands; homely and lived-in like his waistcoat, saturated with the smell of tobacco and sweat, on which little Aysha so much loved to weep; quivering with pain and anger like his upper lip during one of his nervous fits.

I call Julio Jurenito by the simple, almost familiar name of 'Teacher'; although he never taught anybody anything; he had no religious canons, no ethical code, not so much as a simple, tuppenny-ha'penny little philosophical system. I will say more:

he, the great pauper, did not even have that pathetic private income of the ordinary man-in-the-street: he was a man without convictions. I know that, compared with him, any little Member of Parliament will appear as a model of ideological steadfastness, any army quartermaster as the embodiment of honesty. When he violated all the bans imposed by the codes of law and ethics now in force, Julio Jurenito did not justify himself by any new religion or world concept. Before any court of justice in the world, including the revolutionary tribunal of the R.S.F.S.R. and the marabout-priest of Central Africa, the Teacher would appear as a traitor, a liar and the instigator of innumerable crimes. For who, if not the judges, should be the faithful watchdogs guarding the structure and order of this world?

Julio Jurenito taught us to hate the present and, in order that our hatred should be strong and hot, he opened before our thrice astonished eyes a chink of the door leading to the great and inescapable tomorrow. Many, on learning of his deeds, will say he was merely an *agent provocateur*. That is what sage philosophers and jolly journalists called him in his lifetime. But the Teacher, far from rejecting the honourable title, told them: 'The *agent provocateur* is the great midwife of history. The nine moons are up, and if you do not take me, the *agent provocateur* with the smile of peace on his lips and the fountain pen in his pocket, another will come to perform a Caesarean section, and it will go ill with the world.'

But our contemporaries will not, cannot accept this saint without a religion, this sage without a degree from the philosophical schools, this hero in prison garb. For what purpose, then, did the Teacher command me to write the book of his life? I was long tormented by these doubts, looking at the honest intellectuals, those imaginary readers of my book, whose ancient wisdom is ripened—after the fashion of French cheese—in the comfort of their studies, with Tolstoy's picture over the desk. But this time perfidious memory came to my rescue. I remembered how the Teacher, pointing at the seed of a maple

tree, said to me: 'Yours is surer, for it flies not only into space but also into time.' And so I do not write for the craggy minds, not for the heights, not for the chosen of today, the fruitless and doomed ones, but for the lowlands of the future, for new earth upturned by another plough, on which, in blissful idleness, will tumble and play his children, my brothers.

ILYA EHRENBURG

THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF

# Julio Juvenio

AND HIS DISCIPLES: MONSIEUR DELET <sup>Fr</sup>  
FR KARL SCHMIDT, MR COOL, ALEXEY TISHIN <sup>Russ</sup>  
ERCOLE BAMBUCCI, ILYA EHRENBURG  
<sup>or</sup> AND AYSHA, THE NEGRO

In days of peace, war and revolution in Paris, Mexico, Rome, Senegal, in Kineshma and Moscow and in other places; as also various sayings of THE TEACHER on pipe-smoking, death, love, freedom, the game of chess, the tribe of Judah, construction and many other matters.

CHAPTER I  
I meet Julio Jurenio—  
the devil and a  
Dutch pipe

ON MARCH THE 26<sup>TH</sup>, 1913, I was sitting, as always, in a café on the boulevard Montparnasse in front of a cup of coffee, emptied long before, waiting in vain for somebody to set me free by paying the patient waiter six sous. I had discovered this method of nourishing myself during the preceding winter and it had proved brilliantly effective. Nearly always some unexpected deliverer would appear a quarter of an hour before closing time: a French poetess whose verses I had translated into Russian at some time or other; an Argentinian sculptor who, for some reason, hoped that I would help to sell his works to 'one of the princes Chitoukin'; a professional card-sharper of unknown nationality who had won a considerable sum from my uncle at San Sebastian and now evidently suffered pangs of conscience; finally, my old Nanny, who had come to Paris with her employers and, instead of at the Russian church (the one on the rue Daru), had ferched up at this café where Russian down-and-outs were often to be found, no doubt directed there by the absent-mindedness of a policeman who had misread the address. In addition to the canonical six sous, she—my old Nanny—made me a present of a large bun and, deeply moved, kissed me three times on the nose.

As a result perhaps of these unexpected rescues, or possibly under the influence of other circumstances—such as chronic starvation, reading books by Léon Bloy and various amorous upsets—I was in a most mystical mood and inclined to see omens from on high in the lowliest events. The adjacent shops—a grocer's and a fruiterer's—appeared to me as circles of hell; the moustached proprietress of the baker's shop, a virtuous woman of about sixty wearing her hair in a high chignon, an obscene

epebe. I would work on a detailed plan for inviting three thousand inquisitors to Paris to attend the public burning of all those addicted to drinking aperitifs on the city squares. Then I would drink a glass of absinthe, become intoxicated, declaim poems by St Theresa, prove to the *patron*—inured to every queer sight—that Nostradamus had foreseen the Rotonde as the breeding-ground of deadly centipedes and, past midnight, go to knock in vain at the iron doors of the church of St Germain-des-Prés. My day would usually end in the room of my mistress, a Frenchwoman with solid professional experience but a good Catholic, from whom I would demand, at the most unsuitable moments, an explanation of how the seven 'mortal' sins differed from the seven 'capital' ones. And so, little by little, time went by.

That memorable evening I was sitting in a dark corner of the café, sober and entirely well-behaved. Next to me a fat Spaniard, completely naked, grunted and puffed, and on his lap twittered a bony young woman without breasts, also naked but wearing a wide-brimmed hat, which partly hid her face, and a pair of gold slippers. Other people in various stages of undress were seated all around, drinking *marc*. This spectacle, a fairly usual one for the Rotonde, was to be explained by the holding of a masked ball at some 'Neo-Scandinavian Academy'. But to me, of course, all this seemed like the final mobilisation of Beelzebub's forces, directed personally against me. I made all kinds of motions resembling those of swimming in order to ward off the sweating Spaniard and particularly the heavy hips of the nude model, which kept bulging in my direction. I gazed round the café, trying in vain to see the proprietress of the baker's shop or someone who could replace her as the chief marshal and moving spirit of this monstrous rife. The door of the café opened and a very ordinary gentleman in a bowler hat and a grey rubber mackintosh walked in unhurriedly. The clientèle of the Rotonde consisted exclusively of foreigners, artists and plain tramps: people of eccentric outward appearance. Hence neither the Red Indian with chicken-feathers in his headress,

nor my friend the music-hall drummer in his sand-coloured top hat, nor the little nude model—a half-caste in a bright peaked cap like a man's—attracted the slightest attention. But the gentleman in a bowler hat was a sight so unusual that the whole Rotonde quivered and fell silent for a moment, then broke into a murmur of astonishment and alarm. I alone understood it at once. And, indeed, it was enough to look closely at the newcomer to comprehend the very definite purpose of both the mysterious bowler hat and the loose grey coat. A pair of small horns rose steeply from the locks above his temples, while the coat strove vainly to cover a pointed, pugnaciously upraised tail.

I knew resistance was of no avail, and prepared myself for the end. Memories of long ago flashed through my head like tattered fragments: my parents' villa near Moscow smelling of wood resin; myself in a baby's bath, pink and defenceless; walks along Zubovsky Boulevard with Nadya from the high school; evenings in Siena on the edge of a ravine smelling of myrtle. But these last sweet visions were dispelled by the masterful, unconquerable tail.

I expected to be dispatched quickly, perhaps with jeers, perhaps with the traditional claws, perhaps quite simply by a command to follow him into a taxi. But the tormentor showed a rare gift of self-control. He sat down at the next table and, without even looking at me, unfolded an evening newspaper. At length, turning towards me, he opened his mouth to speak. Softly, almost lazily, he uttered '*Garçon, un bock*,' and a moment later a narrow glass was fanning on the table beside him. The devil drinking beer! I could not bear it. Politely, yet with emotion, I said to him: 'You need not wait. I'm ready. At your service. Here's my passport, a book of poems, two photographs, body and soul. I suppose we shall be going by car?' I repeat that I tried to speak calmly and in a business-like manner, as though my life and death were not at stake, for I had noticed at once that my devil was of a phlegmatic disposition.

Now, remembering that far-off evening which was my road to Damascus, I bow before the Teacher's clairvoyance. In reply

to my incoherent words Julio Jurenito did not lose his composure, did not call the waiter, did not go away: no, he looked quietly and clearly into my face and said: 'I know who you think I am. But he does not exist.' These words, which did not greatly differ from the usual sermons of the doctor who treated me for nervous disorders, nevertheless seemed to me a revelation, both wonderful and vile. The whole harmonious structure I had built was collapsing, for without the devil it was all unthinkable—the Rotonde, I myself, the good which existed somewhere. I felt I was about to perish and clunched at the last life-belt. 'But the tail, the tail . . . ' Jurenito smiled. 'There is no tail—neither the Karamazov-Great Dane variety, nor the pointed kind. No tail. Try to get along without the tail. I see that you, like myself, are fond of pipes. I've got a splendid collection—English ones made of old 3-B briar, Hungarian cherry-wood, Turkish ones of Levantine red earth with jasmine mouth-pieces, Dutch ones.' I could not bear it and began to moan softly, staring with the last remnant of hope at the tail, which struck out to the left of the speaker's legs. Then Jurenito unbuttoned his mackintosh and produced a long Dutch pipe, well smoked, from the side pocket of his trousers. I could hope for nothing further, for there was no longer a tail. More than that, he took off his bowler hat and the imagined horns turned out to be merely strong thick curls of hair, like a Negro's. In fear and torment I gazed at the involuntary deceiver, while Jurenito calmly lit his pipe.

I was by no means pleased that my enemy did not exist, that he was only my nonsensical invention. On the contrary, together with him vanished all hope of comfort, the comfort of hell perhaps, but still the comfort of something homely, tangible, open to comprehension. I felt I was in a desert and, searching for some stay among the shifting sands, I asked Jurenito: 'Very well, let us assume he does not exist. But *something* exists, doesn't it?' Julio smiled again, showing teeth which were so even and white that I remembered the poster in the trams saying 'Use Only Dentról', and replied politely, almost apologetically.

cally 'No'. This 'no' sounded as though I had asked him for a light or whether he had read the latest issue of *Cornétiá*.

'But surely, surely there is something to hold all this together? Surely someone controls this Spaniard? Surely there is some meaning in him?'

'This Spaniard was born thirty years or so ago. At first he was hairless, then he grew some hair. He says he's an interior decorator but in reality he plays the stock market. Today he made forty louis. He's satisfied. His stomach functions well. The other organs too. Just now he's had dinner (three francs, *vin compris*) and taken a girl. Then he'll lose twenty louis on the stock exchange. Then he'll fall ill with the gout and drink sinking water. Then he'll die and rot and there'll be grass, common-or-garden grass, you know the kind. Beyond that, if it pleases you, go ahead and try and find a secret aim and a hidden meaning in it all. It won't cost you anything.'

'No,' I cried, unable to restrain myself, 'this cannot be! You haven't got a tail but you're *he* all right. There is good, do you understand? The eternal, the absolute!'

Jurenito did not lose composure and did not even raise his voice. 'Really, I do assure you I'm not the devil. You flatter me. Besides, those charming creatures don't exist, alas! You may sleep in peace. There's even no need for bromides. But there's no good either. And the other thing, the one with a capital G, also doesn't exist, my dear fellow. It's all an invention. They made it up for lack of anything better to do. What sort of a God can there be without the devil? "The good", you say? Well, take a look at this girl. She hasn't had any dinner today. Like yourself, you understand? She's hungry, she's got that empty feeling in her stomach, but she knows she mustn't ask. She's got to drink that sweet, sticky liqueur. It makes her sick. And the Spaniard makes her sick too; he's got cold wet hands that keep crawling about all over her body. She's got a little boy, he's with an old woman in the country, it costs her a hundred a month. Today she got a postcard, he's ill—the doctor, medicines and the rest of it. That means she's got to try and earn a

bit more. And *that* means being bright and cheerful: off to the ball with you—only not as Margot, mind (that's her name), but as Salammbô the Carthaginian—and keep kissing your Spaniard on the lips, those slibery oysters, quick, hard kisses, as if you're beside yourself with passion. Maybe he'll throw in another twenty sous. In short, an everyday story, silly stuff. But it's the kind of silly stuff to send all your saints and mystics flying head over heels. Of course everything's classified under headings: this is good, that's evil. The trouble is that somebody let a tiny error creep in, a misunderstanding if you like. Justice? In that case why didn't you invent a better landlord? One who'll see to it that this sort of thing doesn't happen on his farm? Or perhaps you believe that evil's a "trial", a "Redemption", you say? But that's a childish justification of far from childish things. That's how he "tries" the girl, is it? Well done, the All-merciful! Only why doesn't he try the Spaniard as well? Scales without weights. In the next life? Yes, yes! But where do you find it? On what map? So far the soul's an abstraction, but when you die your arms and legs begin to smell, then bones, then dust: I sat for a long time saying nothing, crushed by these words. Then, suddenly, out of the meaningless, revolving chaos a point leapt out, tiny and black. I quickly clambered on to it.

'Very well, let's say there's no Creator, no meaning, no good, no justice. But there is nothingness. And if there's nothingness then there's also reality, meaning, spirit and a Creator.'

'My friend, you're incorrigible. Your "nothingness" hasn't got a tail either, has it? Yet the pipe's here, and I'm here, and the Spaniard. That's the whole joke: that everything exists and after it there's nothing. At this moment old John's dying and little Johnny's giving his first squeak. An hour ago there was rain, now it's dry again. It turns, it rotates, and that's all.'

'But it's impossible to live like that! It's vile, shameful . . . it's futile!'

'What can you do? You didn't choose it. You're faced with a *fait accompli*. A furnished house. Some like it very much and say it's comfortable, others hate it; but meanwhile all they do

is peacefully take the pictures off one wall and re-hang them on another.'

At that moment a magnificent, yet at the same time simple thought struck me. I think it must have come from Jurento, and that was his first revelation to me. Paying no attention to the customers and waiters, I jumped up, pushed back my chair and cried: 'But surely it's possible to destroy the house?' Julio nodded and asked me to sit down again.

'A perfectly legitimate desire. Let's do it.'

He must be an anarchist, Spain's full of them, I thought, and asked in a whisper: 'A bomb? An infernal machine?'

'You're a delightful child,' said Jurento. 'With a bomb you can cripple a pair of fat gendarmes, at best some king or other who collects Chinese figurines and adores playing tennis. No, we'll do something different.'

I understood that to question him further would be improper, and merely said, bowing ceremoniously: 'I shall be your disciple, faithful and zealous. But give me reality, or else, tonight or tomorrow morning, I might go mad.' He took a small meerschaum pipe out of his pocket and handed it to me. 'Fill it with good caporal tobacco and smoke it: there's reality for you.'

We dined together. After the cheese Jurento ordered two glasses of Clos Vougeot and once more assured me that this—that is, the Clos Vougeot—was reality and not a dream. In the small hours at the 'Neo-Scandinavian Academy', after introducing me to a plump little Swedish girl dressed in a transparent tunic and resembling a fresh roll with fresh wet country butter on it, he said: 'This is real all right, not like that "good" of yours.' And he thumped me on the shoulder like a friend: 'Now good night! See you tomorrow!'

CHAPTER II  
The Teacher's childhood  
and youth

IN THIS CHAPTER I wish to share with the reader those few and fragmentary facts I know about the life of Julio Jurenito before the memorable night when we met at the Rotonde. Sometimes the Teacher would tell me separate incidents from his boyhood years, and I shall try here to reproduce them and link them together, so that all should know that Jurenito was not a myth, not a fairy-tale hero, but the son of Pedro-Luis Jurenito, a sugar manufacturer from Guanajuata.

There have been many absurd legends about the Teacher's origins. The story that has come my way most often is that this tall, thin man with eyes of marvellous mobility, yet possessing the inconceivable power of bringing time to a stop, was an incarnation of Buddha. This legend came about as a result of the following incident, in itself an insignificant one. In March 1888, at the town of Allahabad in Central India, a valuable statue of the Buddha, dated by experts in the third or fourth century of our era, disappeared from the temple. This happened, in all likelihood, owing to the watchman's sleepiness and the predilection of certain British officials for Oriental antiques. Twenty-five years later the rumour was persistently heard in theosophical circles that the Buddha, having abandoned his former flesh, was re-incarnated in the Mexican, Jurenito, owing to which the image of his former personification had ceased to be visible. This legend enjoyed such success that once, when the Teacher spent the night in the studio of a certain Russian poet—a theosophist—a rather curious scene took place. At night the poet in his night-shirt crept across to the sleeping Teacher and started fingering his face. Caught in the act and mildly suspected of evil intentions, he explained that he was looking for a wart in the middle of Jurenito's forehead: the third eye which is the formal feature of Buddha's incarnations.

This and similar fables do not, of course, deserve the slightest credence.

The Teacher was born on March 25th, 1888, in Mexico, in the small town of Guanajuata, known for its gold mines. He was baptized according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church and received the names Julio-Maria-Diego-Pablo-Angelica. I fancy he was an inquisitive and uncomfortable child. It is known to me, for example, that as a five-year-old boy he sawed off a kitten's head with a bread knife, wishing to find out the difference between life and death. Two years later, having begun to doubt the Virgin Mary and many other things, he crept into the church, viscerated a statue of the Madonna made of brocade stretched over a dummy, and remained wholly satisfied by the experiment.

At sixteen he fell in love and started looking at the stars and thinking about eternity. But, having enjoyed some terrestrial pleasures, he forgot about stars and eternity, hastily forsook the girl and, once and for all, lost any taste for what people call 'love'. Fortunately the girl was quickly comforted and married a contractor from Vera Cruz. Jurenito split no tears over this first love, but he sent a silver-plated dinner service of twelve covers to this, the only woman thus singled out by him in the whole of his life.

After this he went to seek gold at El Oro, but, reluctant to waste time on work in the mines, drank a jug of strong *pulque*, pulled out a respectable-sized knife and drew a line across the ground with it in front of a crowd of miners returning home from work, saying: 'Just for today this is the territory of Guanajuata, and none of you shall cross this line without paying me ransom, so bring out all your gold.' The people of El Oro were greedy but cowardly, and at the mere name of lawless Guanajuata they were willing to part with anything in the world merely to remain alive. An hour later Jurenito was making his way through the wooded mountains with a sack of gold. He bought a horse from the Indians and safely reached the frontier of the United States. This incident

was told me by a friend of Jurenito's and mine, the painter Diego Rivera, who had been at El Oro on the memorable day, had seen the line on the sand, the frightened miners and the humps of gold in Jurenito's wide-brimmed hat with its leather strap.

In one of the Southern States the Teacher sold the gold for 8,000 dollars and then set about spending these, for which purpose he treated all the Negroes he met to gin, bought up rare postage stamps and commissioned articles in praise of himself in the most independent newspapers, illustrating the articles with pictures of suspicious-looking youths from the bazars of Damascus. Thus, with great exertion, he succeeded in getting through six thousand, but could not manage the last two. Then he invited the rich but avaricious businessmen of the town to a gala dinner, after which, having handed round boxes of magnificent Corona cigars, he lit the remaining hundred-dollar bills twisted into rapiers, so that all were able to light their cigars without striking a match. The businessmen crawled about on their knees, picking up the light, silvery ash. Their digestion was unquestionably disturbed, but Jurenito was relieved of the tedious pastime of spending money, of which he had become thoroughly tired.

This done, Jurenito again returned to Mexico and decided to occupy himself with the revolution. Those were the turbulent years of the young republic. Of all the parties Jurenito preferred Zapata and his naive rebels, who hated urban culture, sugar-manufacturing machines, railway engines, and the men who carried death, money and syphilis. Carranza, after treacherously killing Zapata, snared Jurenito in a trap, Julio was saved by an accident. During the hours of waiting for death he experienced, instead of the solemn feelings described by poets, a strong sense of boredom and sleepiness, and after this experiment he set about killing others in a simple, everyday manner: he commanded the Indians in the famous battle of Celaya, where Villa's splendid army was routed. His courage, resourcefulness and talent aroused the admiration of Obregon, the

present President of the Mexican republic. But the overthrow of power, shootings and the pursuit of enemies also turned out to be a monotonous and boring business. After the seventh revolution Jurenito bought a microscope, a set of drawing instruments and four crates of books and turned to scientific studies of various kinds. Soon afterwards he visited Lima and Buenos Aires, but he settled in New York.

Jurenito studied mathematics, philosophy, machine turning, electronics, hydrology, Egyptology, playing the ocarina, the game of chess, political economy, versification and a number of other sciences, trades, arts and games. With exceptional ease he acquired command of languages. Here are the languages which he spoke quite faultlessly: Spanish, English, French, German, Russian, Italian, Arabic, Aztec and Chinese; and he had a working knowledge of dozens of others.

At the same time Jurenito occupied himself with the arts. I shall describe his work in this field in one of the later chapters.

All these pursuits failed to satisfy him and, after prolonged reflection, he decided—this was on September 17th, 1912—that culture was an evil and should be fought in every way, though not with the pathetic knives of Zapata's shepherds but with the weapons developed by culture itself. The thing to do was not to attack culture but to nurse its spreading ulcers, which would gradually consume its rotting body. And so that day became the date on which Jurenito grasped the essence of his mission: that of being a *great agent provocateur*.

The start of his career was marked by failure. Jurenito was too young, inexperienced in the ways of the world, and alone. He adopted the naive course of persuasion, and arranged for illuminated posters to be projected on the night sky of New York by means of special contrivances. The inhabitants of that city well remember the striking start of Jurenito's activities. Majestically glowing letters, wiping the stars off the sky, proclaimed: 'You who hunger! Don't forget there are still grouse streaks. Glorify the gifts of civilisation!' and so on.

Everyone decided that this was part of a large delicatessen store's publicity campaign. But an Irish tramp, for some reason, threw a bomb into the smart Bristol restaurant that very night. They executed the Irishman by seating him in the electric chair, whilst Jurenito, unwilling to waste his time on provincial idylls of this kind, bought a ticket on the liner Rex and sailed away to Europe, where the ground was more favourable for his activities than in the excessively New and insufficiently civilised World. A few months after Jurenito's arrival in Europe I met him and became his first disciple.

That is all I know about the first twenty-five years of the Teacher's life. I should like to end this chapter with words of love for the country which bore the great man. Future generations will honour two countries: Mexico and Russia, where he ended his days and his work. Two towns will eternally attract the pilgrims: Konotop, the small and dirty, and distant Guanajuata.

Russia is my homeland too. I have never been to Mexico. But I have a deep love for that country, which is sacred to me. I love the little town on a hill with its houses rising in terraces, stern and bare, covered only with cacti and the black blotches of Quebra-Piatos, the town to which fell the honour of being the Teacher's birthplace. With deep respect I repeat the names of the men whom Jurenito knew in the days of his youth: President Obregon, the outstanding engineer Paniqui, Rivera the painter, Morales the poet, and Vasconcellos the philosopher. If this book should ever reach them, may they accept my words of esteem and gratitude with trust. And if anyone who has read my book should ever have the happiness of seeing Guanajuata with his own eyes, may he kiss her sombre, hot and blessed soil for me.

CHAPTER III  
Dollars and the Bible—  
three days in the  
life of Mr Cool

A FEW DAYS LATER Jurenito came to see me early in the morning and immediately, without even saying good morning, held out to me a copy of the *Petit Parisien* with an advertisement marked in pencil. In the section headed 'miscellaneous', between an advertisement for a new laxative for hens suffering from diphtheria and a letter from someone called Paul to his 'pussy-car' who unjustly suspected him of infidelity and to whom he would remain faithful to the grave, stood the following:

Missionary Co. for the Propagation of the Bible among the  
Natives of Europe, Inc.  
(San Francisco - Chicago - New York)

REQUIRES

active missionaries for various countries, and also agents  
for the sale of patent appliances.  
Apply to:— Hotel de la Croix, 10, Mr Cool

'Don't you see this comes just at the right time?' said Jurenito (on the very first night after dinner he had begun to address me with the familiar *tu*, thus establishing a tone of friendship and at the same time of command). Half an hour later we were seated together in Mr Cool's study. His face, broad, flat and well-fed, conveyed nothing in particular. What was unusual were his feet, in pointed, reddish shoes, which rested on two cunningly rotating pedestals, somewhat higher than the level of his head. He was simultaneously reading the Bible, dictating a letter to the Minister of Fine Arts of the Republic of Chile to a shorthand-typist, listening to yesterday's cattle prices over the telephone from Chicago, chatting with us, smoking a fat cigar, eating a soft-boiled egg and looking at the photograph

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of a plump actress. His armchair, which resembled a dentist's, was equipped with all kinds of lathes, tubes, mechanical holders in the shape of ladies' fingers, and a whole keyboard of incomprehensible buttons. This way of life had naturally left its imprint on Mr Cool. Later on I noticed, for example, that he tended to apply the methods of a telephone conversation to ordinary intercourse. One night, sitting alone in a restaurant and feeling bored, he suddenly barked at a passing actress: 'Hello! Woman? Cool speaking. Are you free? Want to come with me? Hello! let me have an estimate. I'm offering a dinner and ten dollars'. Sometimes he felt an urgent need to press his push-buttons, and this perfectly understandable habit had a distressing effect on the people around him. But generally speaking he was a rather well-mannered person, and he received us courteously, acquainting Jurento at once with the substance of his intentions.

Having lived a fair number of years in his native America, Mr Cool had learned from tourists and newspaper articles that Europe was devoid of morality and organisation. In Europe, those two mighty levers of civilisation—the Bible and the dollar—did not go together. It occurred to Mr Cool that America must show her gratitude for that great moment when the sailor Juan Luis, a bandit known in the two Castles, mumbled a prayer before cutting an Indian's throat, sprinkled him with sea water and thus laid the foundations for the triumph of the Cross. Now it was America's turn to save demented Europe. In order to put this into effect Mr Cool promoted an incorporated company with very substantial basic capital and, on his arrival in Europe, started working out a plan of action. Having explained all this to the Teacher he pressed the smallest of the push-buttons and, taking out various drafts from the files which popped up before him, read them out to us. Some of these have stuck in my memory and I will quote them here, though unfortunately without details, figures and drawings.

It is necessary to put an end to thieving, but not merely by repressive measures. For this purpose it is necessary to

protect the infirm souls of the poor from the temptations of city life by reminding them of the eternal bliss which is accessible to all. The Missionary Co. Inc. manufactures various inspirational posters: fiery circles with the words 'Man does not Live by Bread Alone' to place over the entrances of bakers' shops, 'Blessed be They that Thirst' over the beershops, 'God's Kingdom is Within Us' over clothing shops, etc.

② All brothel keepers should be obliged to instal automatic machines supplying the appropriate hygienic requisites. The packages should bear the words 'Friend, Remember your Pure and Innocent Bride at Home'. These automatic machines, according to Mr Cool, were a highly profitable business, yielding up to 1000 francs clear profit a month.

③ Memorandum to the Minister of Justice of the French Republic. Having several times visited the vicinity of the Santé prison during executions, Mr Cool is glad to note a large gathering of onlookers and an acutely developed sense of justice manifesting itself in unconcealed enthusiasm at the sight of this instructive ceremony. He notes the initiative of small traders, who set up stalls round the prison for the sale of sweets during the execution, as well as refreshing drinks and even toys for children brought along by their intelligent and energetic mothers. Mr Cool wonders, however, why these festive occasions are not utilised for moral propaganda, and, fully understanding certain peculiarities of the French secular State, suggests that the Missionary Co. Inc. be entrusted with organisation rights. Transportable stands to be erected round the guillotine with admission prices within the means of even the working population. Shops selling, apart from the usual goods, photographs of the criminals before and after the judiciary act, books of spiritual and moral content, and opera glasses for hire. After the conclusion of the official part of the festival, a film showing the childhood of the criminal and of a good citizen: the first is naughty, then steals, then rapes, then kills, then a

shot of his severed head in the hands of the esteemed M. Deibler; the other saves the soue he is given to spend on chocolate—marries—savings book—private income—a shaded grave and a memorial headstone 'in perpetuity'. All this followed by a brief sermon which may satisfy the requirements of the secular part of the audience: the criminal has neglected his school, society, his duties as an elector, and the higher Being known as *La Patrie*. The festival ends to the strains of the *Girl's Prayer for a Villain's Soul* and the *Marseillaise*.

(4) Foreseeing the possibility of wars after the Morocco conflict, Mr Cool fears the pollution of millions of Christians by the shedding of blood, and therefore proposes to all European States having colonies in Africa to proceed with the creation of black armies. In his opinion, taking adults from the villages by force is cruel and, above all, unpractical. Experience with oysters, ostriches and various other kinds of animals suggests the idea of breeding-grounds. You pick the females of the most fertile tribes and thirty years later any State can have its own army, completely ready for use, without violating the moral feelings or the economic interests of its own population.

Having acquainted us with these bold and original projects Mr Cool complained to the Teacher about the ignorance of Europeans. The Minister of Justice had not answered his letter. His automatic slot-machines were installed in many brothels but the inspirational texts had been carefully smeared over with blacking. The electric anti-theft signs put up in London had been destroyed during the night by ill-wishers—no doubt Russian anarchists. Finally, instead of 'black breeding-grounds', peace congresses and conscription laws were all the rage. That was why he had decided to build up a staff of experienced and energetic agents with the help of newspaper advertisements.

Jurenito expressed his admiration and astonishment at the power and revolutionary character of Mr Cool's ideas. Modestly but not without dignity he referred to his career as a missionary in Mexico, and offered his services. His brief speech made so

strong an impression on Mr Cool that the latter, pushing aside his egg and ceasing to listen halfway through the latest list of prices for rams, cried: 'You're a great man too! Hello? You shall be my guide through Europe. Expense account, etc. Hello? Let me have an estimate? We bowed and withdrew.

A deep abyss lay between yesterday and today. Having lost my all, I did not mistake Mr Cool for the devil, despite his suspicious-looking feet, push-buttons and files. Yet he seemed to me excessively repulsive and more dangerous than the breadshop proprietress or the Spaniard. I said as much to the Teacher. Jurenito agreed. 'Of course he's utterly vile, but in my choice of disciples I am not guided by my stomach's reaction to them but by the degree of their usefulness to the cause. In order that you may understand the force concealed in that man, we shall spend the next three days with him. Watch and learn. It will be much more instructive than all the visions of hell of our Lenten saints.'

Teacher, you were right as always! What are all the bonfires of Saint Ignatius, what is all the spiritual fire of our own Zosima compared with those three days, when the chief parts were played by the clock hand and the small blue cheque-book in Mr Cool's side-pocket? They have passed by, rapid and inexorable, and their memory resembles a strip of film.

Tuesday. At 1 p.m., after lunch, Mr Cool drives to an exhibition. His attention is attracted, among other things, by some Cubist still-lives by a young painter called Dorot. Two cups, a cucumber and a head of cabbage, broken up into planes. Jurenito explains. Mr Cool is obviously indignant. 'This is coarse materialism! Hello? Immorality! Spiritual degradation! A cucumber in the hands of the Madonna, that I can understand. A spiritual cucumber! What do you say this is? Form? Hello! Corruption! I'm buying.' He takes out his cheque-book. He buys all Dorot's canvases from the gallery owner. 3 p.m. The painter, radiant, delivers all his paintings at Mr Cool's hotel. Twenty-eight of them. The cheque-book again. Whereupon, in front of Dorot's eyes, two Negro servants immediately

proceed to cut the canvases into tiny pieces. 'Hello, young man, you must give up art. Here, this is beautiful and moral.' (Points at six washed-out blondes under a cypress). 'That isn't a Dorot, that's a what's-his-name?' (Jurento whispers: 'Maurice Denys'). 'With the money I've paid you, buy a small china shop or try selling my patent slot-machines. Hello? Objections are useless. Anything you paint I shall buy up through my agents and destroy at once. Protest? But they're my property. I've bought them. I can do with them as I please. The dollar, my friend, a higher force. The dollar and the Bible.' 5 p.m.: Stop press of the *Intransigent*: the young painter Dorot has hanged himself. Causes unknown. At 6 p.m. Jurento, on behalf of Mr Cool, orders a funeral wreath with the inscription: 'Fear not the destroyers of the body, for they cannot kill the soul'.

On Wednesday Mr Cool decides to try his hand at politics. He reads in the morning paper that the workers at a wallpaper factory at Meudon near Paris have been out on strike for a fortnight, united to a man, demanding a reduction of their working day by one hour. The solidarity of the lowest strata of the population for their own coarsely materialistic interests and their contempt for the spiritual world have always aroused Mr Cool's indignation. At 11 a.m. he is already receiving some private detectives who have detailed information on the four members of the strike committee. Having received their instructions they set to work. They invite Pierre Granier, an alcoholic, for a few drinks. By 5 p.m. he has received a dozen kicks and is lying dead drunk in a closet. Bideau has a conspicuous daughter, the pet of the family. Offer of a trip to the South. A quarter of an hour's soul-searching and a leaf from the same blue cheque-book. Bideau leaves for Nice by the 8.20 train. Old Bedier is intimidated by photographs of prison, a tale of intercepted orders and some decorations donned expressly for this purpose by one of the dicks. He runs off to Paris to join his nephew. The only one left is Lize, who doesn't drink, won't accept money and isn't afraid of decorations. At

3 p.m. a long consultation in Mr Cool's office. The dicks demand a double fee. The cheque-book again. At 7 p.m. a meeting of the strikers. It turns out that three of the ringleaders have fled and Lize, the fourth, is in prison: a thousand dollars have been found under his mattress and he was unable to explain where they came from. 'Thief!' 'He was bribed!' 'Down with Lize!' The owners' representative, an old overseer, explains helpfully: 'Go back to work, no one will be victimised'. General rejoicing. The strike is over. Mr Cool commissions a memorial board but hesitates in his choice of a text. He inquires by wireless of a friend, Pastor Bones in Chicago, whether a slight modification in the Scriptures is permissible in view of the replacement of the feudal structure of society by capitalism. The answer is satisfactory. 'The text over the factory gates will be: 'Give to God that which is God's and to the boss that which is the boss's'.

Thursday. Spring. Mr Cool is in a playful mood. He's taking off. 'Love, love, you stir the blood!' A charming girl. Hello! Who's this? Junior salesgirl from the glove department of the Louvre. Call yesterday's dicks. Noon. Mademoiselle Lucie turns out to have a fiancé, Monsieur Paul, an employee of the Crédit Lyonnais. Find out his weaknesses. At 5 p.m. Monsieur Paul loses 1,800 francs at baccarat. At 6 p.m. he comes to meet Lucie outside the shop. They part at her door, the girl weeps. At 8 p.m. she receives a note inviting her to call at the Café Royal, private room No. 8, where she will immediately receive 1,800 francs. We drive to the restaurant with Mr Cool. A beggar outside asks for a few sous. Once again I am amazed by the energy of our new friend; turning to the beggar he raises his arms to heaven: 'Courage, my friend, in the next life the last shall be first'. Inside the café Jurento and I stay in the public rooms. An hour later we are joined for a minute by Mr Cool, full of *joie de vivre* as always, making out a cheque to Mademoiselle . . . for 1,800 francs. After a moment's reflection he writes on the reverse of the cheque: 'Love pardons all (Corinthians 13, 5)'.

Thus passed our three days with Mr Cool. Leaving the café at night with the Teacher I was troubled. There was a smell of warm rain, the chestnut buds were swelling and my heart throbbed with the joy of living. I remembered Dorot, blue and with his tongue protruding; Lize being kicked along by the gendarmes; and finally, the way in which little Lucie, under the mocking glances of the waiters, vainly tried to cover her red little nose with powder in the vestibule of the café: I remembered it all and could not contain myself.

'Tell me, why have you not killed Cool?'

Jurenio laughed. 'My dear friend, who'd smash his gun when he's just off to fight? Remember, we want to destroy everything. Cool is first-class heavy artillery.'

That is how Mr Cool, without knowing it (for he regarded Jurenio as his guide and regularly paid him 100 dollars a month), became the great Teacher's second disciple.

#### CHAPTER IV

### The kind gods of Aysha— the Teacher's views on religion

ONE MORNING at the Hotel Majestic, after writing more than twenty business letters, Julio Jurenio rang for a pageboy to take them to the letterbox. Being in a hurry and wanting to stick the stamps on quickly, he told the Negro boy to put out his tongue. This method of stamp-sticking satisfied them both, and the next day the pageboy came without being called, took up his position by the side of the desk and obligingly put out his rough, pointed tongue. When the procedure was completed he said proudly to Jurenio: 'Gikhray can do that too.' In reply to our questions he invited us trustingly to follow him. We went into a cramped, dirty closet under the backstairs where the pageboy lived. On the floor we saw a small Negro idol recently made out of the shell of a coconut. He sat with his legs crossed and a postage stamp was stuck on his outstretched tongue. Aysha (that was the pageboy's name) gazed at the idol with a mother's tenderness, repeating: 'Gikhray is very clever, he can do anything.' Then we saw two more idols; one of them was cleaning shoes, the other stood in front of a door with a fragment of a mirror set in it. It transpired that Shirik and Gmekho (those were the names of Gikhray's two brothers) were also omnipotent and capable of doing complicated things surpassing human understanding. The Teacher was pleased and almost excited. 'You see,' he said to Mr Cool and myself, 'here, at the Hotel Majestic, a splendid mythology is being created. In hundreds of years' time Shirik will be shaking the earthly dust off the souls of the dead, Gmekho will be letting them pass through the holy gates, and dear old Gikhray with his five-sou postage stamp will be the eternal messenger linking our world with the transcendental. Have you forgotten the

after-dinner stories of the wise Hellenes, and the hours delivered without charge to the poor camelherd? You, a Hebrew,' he said to me, 'do you not remember how Jehovah was insulted by your maidens, how he fought with Jacob, was jealous if Israel so much as cast an eye at a Babylonian idol, and bargained over wretched Sodom? And you, Mr Christian, have you not endowed your God with all the features of humanity from birth to death, merely obscuring them a little by some slight deviations from physiology? That poor little housewife of Raphael's—who, incidentally, fulfilled her conjugal tasks with the utmost virtue—how many pious tears has she produced among Germany's hopeless old maids in her Dresden perpetuation! Has mankind invented for its multi-racial Olympus any rules other than those of the Chinese Empire or the Republic of San Marino? (The monarchy of Judah, the oligarchy of India, the plutocracy, finally, of the good Catholic's thousands of saints grown rich on the proceeds of their saintliness). Some alleviate the tyranny of justice by the constitutional intervention of mercy; others, on the contrary, solemnly restore autocracy. The heavenly ministries: the ministry of war with various ranks of seraphim, cherubim, angels and archangels; that of justice with its courts, prosecutors and defence counsel, its alleviating circumstances, shopkeeper's scales, forced labour for a limited period and in perpetuity; that of education with its prophets, propaganda and even its illuminated signs on the walls of the palace at Babylon, etc. You, my children, are chewing the cud which has passed through all the four lawful stomachs, and Aysha is preparing a new one for the Claudels and the Bulgakovs of the thirtieth century.'

Aysha listened to the Teacher as though in a trance, his mouth again wide open, but this time for no practical purpose. The wealth of mysterious words and splendid names so amazed him that he fell on his knees and kissed the toe of Jurento's shoe. The Teacher said to him: 'From now on you shall follow me everywhere.' 'What a pity I didn't know, I'd have found you a better valet,' said Mr Cool.

I asked the Teacher why he had chosen the little Negro. 'He believes,' said Jurento; 'and that is as rare in your Europe as a good-looking virgin or an honest statesman. Your faith is cowardly for it casts a shadow of doubt and irony, schoolboy curiosity and the calculation of a shopkeeper afraid of making a loss on his wares. Find me an abbot who does not consult a natural history textbook on the sly to find out the size of a whale's throat, or try to explain the virgin birth by the complicated symbolism of a fashionable philosopher. Your atheism is no braver than your faith, for in its wake creep superstition, conversions half an hour before death, the works of Steiner, all the eternal begging at the doors of the insurance company. Your atheists rant and roar when they've got a glass of vermouth inside them, but later remembering the smell of a cemetery on a summer's noon, they make sure the gospels are close at hand just in case, talk about the elusive spirit (a vague gesture with the hands) and stay awake all night if their wife happens to break her dressing-table mirror. I am taking Aysha because in him lives faith, naked, unshamed, all-gladdening, and it will be a strong weapon in my hands. Others will see in me a teacher or an adventurer, a sage or a charlatan, but for him I will be a god, who knows how to stick on stamps and speak extraordinary words, whom he will carve, draw and model, and to whom he will remain faithful until his last breath.'

Thus spoke the Teacher. Mr Cool, carried away by these thoughts, tried in vain to wax indignant and, finally, in order to justify himself and his smile of sympathy for so immoral an attitude, said: 'My friend, I know you're only joking. I'm quite sure you're a good Christian, and a splendid guide besides,' and he nudged Jurento's side affectionately with a fat fist.

Later the Teacher came back repeatedly to questions of faith, creeds and religions. He spoke of them—as he did of other so-called important questions—in a jocular, flippanant manner. The Teacher maintained that the only subjects on which you can talk seriously—academically, with a catch in your

throat or with a bibliography, from the bottom of your heart or with quotations from German authors—were methods of breaking in a new pipe, various kinds of spitting (with or without a whistling sound), and the structure of the imitable Charlie Chaplin's legs. In all other cases he preferred a smile to a prayer and a jolly newspaper article to a standard work in many volumes. When the whole garden has been explored long since, he used to say, 'it's futile to walk up and down the paths with an earnest air and a pocket flora. Only by playing, skipping aimlessly among the flowerbeds while thinking about a kiss you should have received but didn't, or about another helping of whipped cream, might you accidentally stumble across a new flower.'

In striving to reproduce Julio Jurenito's diverse sayings about faith I fear that, by reason of my nature which is lugubrious and lumpish, I may invest them with a false, deliberate seriousness. In fact, these thoughts were light and innocent like the twittings of a sixteen-year-old maiden on various systems of proportional representation.

One day, transporting Gikhray's brothers—Gmekho and Shirik—from the closet at the Majestic to his studio, the Teacher said: 'They'll be comfortable between Christ in a Castilian skirt and a bronze Buddha stroking his belly with his finger. Gods are all splendid, equal and worthy of one another. But you hope in vain to remain on Aysha's level. He has only just made his god, like a young poet who has just written his first poem; he is excited, he feels he must run and tell everybody about it, the umbilical cord still dangles, there's life in him, everything. But you—you have the works of some genius or other who died and rotted away five hundred years ago—or a thousand, or two thousand—bound in manila cloth (leather corners, initials)—the schoolboy crams his lessons you accord your respect but not your interest; only very, very rarely, in the dentist's waiting-room, when you're very bored, do you reverently open the two-hundred-and-forty-sixth edition. For you God isn't bread, isn't life, not even a luxury object, but

some sort of a jar with ointment in it on the bathroom shelf (who was it that prescribed it, and for whom? the prescription was lost long ago), which you don't throw out only because it's stood there so long that you've ceased to notice it.'

'Of course,' the Teacher remarked one day, 'those experiments with Job were rather risky. Today no doubt the antivivisection society would have brought both contestants to justice. But at least there was decent compensation for the material losses, sickness, death of wife, children and cattle. True, they didn't get quite as far as resurrecting the old wife, but they produced a new one, and a very fertile one at that. Possibly Job even gained on the transaction. In any case, virtue triumphed. But what can be said of Berg, Berg the old furrier, who was more virtuous than Job himself, praised God's justice day and night and was found with his belly slit open on a rubbish heap at Balta? His children will be happy, you say? His grandchildren? Yes, yes, even unto the twentieth generation. And yet he must be at least the thirtieth of his line whose belly they've slit open, and how neatly they do it, with never a miss! The Almighty winning a bet again? But why do millions of Bergs have to perish just to satisfy His uncontrollable gambling instinct? No, there's clearly something wrong here. Even a little child knows that Ivan the honest, the diligent, the kind and all the rest of it, will swell up and die of hunger in the backyard of Ivan the thief, the liar and villain, who won't bat an eyelid, and there won't be any contrition, no crawling about on all fours, no mortal sweat to satisfy public opinion—nothing. Everything's been investigated to the very end and nothing in the least comforting has been found.'

'Then they turn to things which are rather more difficult to investigate. The earth, very well; but what's above the earth? Justice, Redemption. It could be, of course, that there's nothing but dust and steam, but what if there's something else? Who knows? A man will live year after year, there's cholera all round, railway accidents, the Japanese, and still he goes on living. Then he eats a roach in sour cream, chokes on a tiny

bone and that's the end. Who knows if it isn't ordained from on high? An accident, but what if the accident's a clever one with a degree in theology and a diploma conferring on it the title of Providence? An old woman kneels in church, praying to her "ever-merciful Lady"; the brown cow's in calf—what shall it be? Mother of God, please let it be a heifer! (for the calf's sins). St Genevieve instead of the old woman, the Gotths instead of the calf, and there's your fresco by Puvis de Chavannes. So much for earthly things, but what's above? That's still more doubtful. But uncertainty is a stick with two ends. Anybody would rather send so important a letter by registered post, especially if the post office is run so badly. Then the books, the schools . . . Atheism's rampant. In other words, the currency of the kingdom of heaven has been devalued till it can fall no lower. The cashier fades and is swallowed up by the very mists which created him.

Another time the Teacher spoke to us of the influence of sex on religion: 'Priapus's mad bull is slaughtered. If you don't put a mare in foal at the right time she'll fall sick. There are no tomcats in love with bitches, and not even the most sophisticated fox terrier will go courting a ewe. We do it differently. Since the peak is the beginning of the descent, and sensuous anticipation is longer and sweeter than the spasms of passion, many seek satisfaction in celibacy. The image dissolves quickly on the bed, even if there's momentary satisfaction, but on the wall it remains intact. The fragile maiden in the nuptial bed (when the others talked about it, it all seemed so much better), that's quick, clear-cut and not to everyone's taste. Besides, he does snort so. Whereas the other one, with the golden curls, mortally sad, inaccessible . . . Oh, be quick, be quick and build white almshouses with brass candlesticks and starched curtains! You priests behind your screens, you'll hear millions of sighs and vows in your confessionals of which the farmers and the brewers dream in vain. Never mind if occasionally there's a little cheating, a certain return to Mother Nature. And they, those who snort and those who do not, first maddened by the

armpit smells, then feeling slightly sick, have they never composed verses about the heavenly beauty of that other, glorious, inconceivable one, who needs no musk? Have they not depicted her on every piece of wood and scrap of canvas? I have seen, at Ganajo near Burgos, a shepherd, a dull-witted youth of about twenty, who castrated himself with a regal gesture before her image in the village church, and died an hour later in a torrent of blood. He's an exception, for the others produce only torrents of lecherous saliva or of the ink of exaltation. What of the secret obscene sects; what of criminal kisses on the lips of ikons; what of old nuns who, in the evening, wipe the dust off the statues; what of old Verlaine crawling from the wrinkled dirty whore to the tender stone maiden with a rose in her hand?'

Once, at Leyden, we went with the Teacher into a Protestant church. On the bare walls there hung only an almsbox and the Sunday-school timetable. The pastor was speaking eloquently about the Saviour's morals and the harmfulness of strong drink. The Teacher said to us: 'These poor people, they have once more repeated the gesture of the child which tears the ribbons and the bells off the toy to find nothing but a handful of stuffing inside. They were given the beautiful doll of Rome. They failed to understand that its deepest meaning was in the lace of its ritual, the silk of its dogma, the susurration of the mass, the rouge and gilt of the crown. They began tearing off the robes, ripping up the vestments, afraid that the living flesh would become vestments, not realising that under the kisses of human lips vestments become words, words, that the words become tremulous and warm, and that there is no flesh beyond that. They have stripped the cabbage, leaf by leaf, and solemnly erected before them the stalk, the moneybox and the Herr Pastor with his disapproval of Schiedam (which, incidentally, is a splendid drink).'

When, in Paris in 1913, they organised a 'Society for the Rational Administration of Pety Trade', Julio Jurenio in his capacity as owner of a coral-necklace shop turned up at the

inaugural meeting and made a proposal to place the society under the high patronage of the Apostolic Church. 'Nowhere,' he said, 'nowhere have I seen such solicitude, such a touching and yet rational attitude towards petty trade as within the walls of the church. As there exist mortal and venial sins, so there are expensive and cheap indulgences. The church has eradicated from memory the concept of "free of charge"; so dear to idlers and parasites, so hateful to us. Back in Athens some tuppenny-ha'penny philosopher maintained that it was possible to do good for the sake of good. The church said "no". Nothing is done for nothing. For every bit of good, a ticket. (Security is the whole heavenly estate.) For sins, you pay. A genuflection, a hundred genuflections, a candle for two sous or forty sous, build a chapel, go to Lourdes, to Santiago, to Rome. We shall stand under the holy protection of St Peter, in whose charge are those objects dear to our hearts—account books, scales and strong keys to fit Yale locks.' The end of Jurenito's speech was drowned in applause but his proposal was not put to the vote, owing to a protest by the owner of a rubber-goods shop, who insisted on the absolutely secular nature of the 'society'.

In teaching us, his disciples, Jurenito liked to show us various specimens of different human types. I was always amazed by the innumerable people with whom he maintained friendly, business, or—in the majority of cases—vague and apparently aimless relations. For example, in Ghent he introduced us to a certain Zur, a Fleming whose occupation was playing the trombone, smoking long clay pipes and waiting for coffee in front of complicated filter machines. This Zur, apart from possessing the above-mentioned qualities, was also—so I guessed—a distant relation of Maeterlinck's. I deduced this from a number of signs. For instance, whenever we happened to fall silent and there was a break in the conversation, Zur would sigh significantly and then explain his sigh by the words 'someone was present in the room'. In general he could not just be quiet, but only in a specially solemn way. His favourite words were 'someone', 'something' and 'strange'. His conversation went more or

less like this: 'I feel sad . . . someone has passed through the garden', 'something has just happened to some girl, and my eyelids are becoming heavy', 'can you hear how strangely the clock is striking? It is a portent of some kind? At morning coffee he was full of memories of the dreams he had had; at dinner troubled by vague sensations of other worlds; at supper by the anticipation of strange encounters (which, however, did not stop him from enjoying all his meals). He saw a mystery in everything: the shape of a cloud, a bird which chanced to fly into the room, even a soup-tureen broken by his servant, a clumsy Flemish woman. After spending two hours with him I suspected him not only of being a relative of Maeterlinck's, but also of suffering from some mental illness. I communicated my impressions to the Teacher, but he replied: 'Alas! Zur is perfectly sane, and I don't believe even that he's a relation of Maeterlinck's, or rather, the venerable poet has many thousands of such relations. On the roof of Zur's house there's a lightning conductor, in the front hall there's a barometer; when he falls ill he calls in the best doctor and is unable to utter a single word in his agitation until the doctor has at last replaced the stethoscope in his pocket and pronounced the name of the illness in Latin. He is very fond of repeating the word "Providence"; but he's had himself inoculated against smallpox, diphtheria and typhoid fever. Of course if you were to ask him about all this he would not be flustered in the least and would say something to the effect that you mustn't "tempt Providence"; and so on. But in him you may observe a man who cannot live without a mystery. You will say that there are many things in the world as yet unprobed by reason. True enough, but in a long row of sealed rooms some of the doors have been broken open and inside you find the most ordinary furnishings of a mediocre home. This cools the fervour of the Zurs of this world; it makes them put the seals back on the doors. The next step is cosmetics, the mending of tattered trousers and all the methods whereby an old strumpet passes herself off as an innocent virgin.'

Returning to the same question of mystery, he introduced me to Wolff, a German theosophist.

In daily life Wolff was an ordinary German and possessed something in the nature of a wife, that is, an anaemic maiden called Mathilde who fulfilled all kinds of duties about the house. But sometimes, having eaten a goodly amount of pork and drunk sufficient beer, having smoked a cigar and knowing not what was to come—i.e. at a time when other mortals read articles about the Cabinet crisis, catch flies and crush them between their fingernails, or simply pick their noses, ears and other things in a variety of ways—Wolff suddenly became very dignified, locked the semblance of a wife in the kitchen, so that she should not disturb him with the clatter of dishes, announced that his spirit was in a higher state, because out of the astral world in which he had lived before (with Mathilde and the pork, that is) he was now going to Buddhi, and that he could now concentrate and see everything. What followed made no sense at all; it turned out that Wolff had previously not been Wolff at all but a lark, an Aztec chieftain and a mistress of Louis XV. Moreover, he not only knew the names of all the towns of Atlantis but even the tramway timetable in its capital. He showed a well-worn Polish penny to his colleagues, asserting that it was one of the pieces of silver received by Judas. A birthmark on his body below the spine was an imprint of the star Cassiopeia, which ruled his destiny. In summer he would go away for a month's holiday, to Dornach where his teacher, Steiner, lived, and there he vaguely pattered about with stones, building a shrine. The Teacher spoke to me of him as an enchanting, sly fellow.

Wolff knows everything, but he finds it a bore to exercise his reason on mathematical problems or social treatises. Besides, he has been dosed too often with the laxative of the Reformation to be able to return to the medieval butcher's sweet mysticism. That is why he prefers to invent an amusing mystery, so as to explode it later in an ingenious way. This is no whit worse than the puzzles in the Sunday papers. It is a perfectly correct and

practical form of sport, and beyond that—don't you see even now the path which leads from Aysla to Wolff?

While travelling in Italy we often visited the churches. Inside them it was generally cosy but dirty, for few people paid any attention of the notices asking them to show respect for the holy place by refraining from spitting. Often, besides the old women numbing stale gossip to each other and children playing hide-and-seek, we would find cripples, dogs and even chickens in the church. We witnessed many curious ceremonies. At Setignano, Christ was interred by riders in fancy dress, men in masks with tiny slits for the eyes, widows in mourning and girls in wedding dresses. This ritual was performed at night, by the light of erect torches, accompanied by drum rolls and the howling of monks. In Florence a white bull, with an individual in a suit of armour seated astride it facing the tail, was led up to the cathedral. The whole thing ended with a firework in the shape of a bird which flew into the church and lit all the candles. In Rome, in a subterranean church, a monk, bellowing like one possessed, led the congregation from altar to altar, whipped his body with ropes and finally lay down in a coffin. In Naples, by the light of hundreds of bonfires, to the popping of crackers and rockets, we saw some blood begin to boil on the statue of a saint with an obscure name. To be exact, at first the blood for some reason refused to boil and the crowd addressed the saint with special Italian expressions consisting of a combination of extravagant praise and invective. Then the blood did come to the boil, everyone clapped their hands, shouted 'Bravo!' to the saint, and the thing ended with dancing.

Watching all this, the Teacher would say: 'The poor prisoner of the Vatican is dreaming with his head facing backwards, as befits his rank. He dreams of the enemy, Voltaire, and he doesn't so much as suspect the existence of Max Linder. For many centuries religion has conscientiously performed its role of lighting the fuse of human emotions. It nursed the arts for that very purpose, and now it's being killed by competition set up by its own offspring. Instead of the meditations of the

Fathers of the Church we have popular lectures at workers' universities; instead of the decalogue, the unassailable morality of successful shopkeepers. But what is to replace the magnificent passions, the murmurs and the brilliance, the purple robes and the thunder of the organ? Charlie Chaplin's grimaces, Pégoud's loops and the million lights of future carnivals.'

At about this time the Teacher submitted a memorandum to Pope Pius X. It was not published anywhere, but nevertheless aroused the indignation of almost the entire Roman press. The *Osservatore Romano* even hinted that it was the result of intrigues by a certain Great Power. I have no copy of the memorandum in my possession, but I think it essential to reproduce the gist of it. Julio Jurenito could not stand stupid anachronisms, even when they did not directly concern him. He was shocked by the absurdly limited use of electricity in Paris, the bushied soldiers in front of the British king's palace, and myself kissing a lady's hand. On this occasion he proposed to the Pope certain measures for successfully attracting the church's clients. It is quite inadequate, he said, for two professors of a theological academy to write six pages about pragmatism or to decide to instal electric light in a church. You must find out where and under what conditions it is easiest to catch the soul, as carefully and thoroughly as a businessman studies the best place and method for publicity. In former times man's so-called 'religious sense' arose from the tranquil contemplation of nature. It was expressed in a desire for simple harmony, tranquillity, inaction. That is why churches, chapels, shrines were built in solitary, quiet places and were centres of peace. Now peace means half-an-hour's digestion after dinner, idleness and one or two playful thoughts. A little nature several times a year from Saturday lunch-time until Monday morning, a hastily exclaimed 'How beautiful!' a walk, dinner and views on picture postcards. The 'religious sense', however, or rather, that sense of exultation which religion can exploit, is aroused in modern man by the sensation of rapid motion: the train, the motor car, the aeroplane, the races, music, the circus, etc.

Hence it is necessary to instal mobile chapels in express trains and motor cars and to reorganise all church services by making them frenzied instead of slow and decorous, transferring them to arenas, making them consist of dizzy leaps, jumps, cracking whips and soaring aeroplanes. Those were the main thoughts expressed in the memorandum. It remained unanswered.

In quoting the Teacher's opinions on religion I cannot omit a reference to the occasion when he returned a strayed sheep to the fold of the Apostolic Church, namely, Monsieur Tic, the mayor of Guiric. This mayor was hated by all the *cités* of the neighbourhood, and articles in the Paris paper *La Croix* described the precise punishments he would suffer in hell. Tic had turned one of the town's churches into a hall for dancing, fencing lessons and other 'high-class entertainment', and when obliged to pass the other church, which still served its former purpose, he would always stop and spit on the ground three times. He deleted the word 'God' in all the schoolbooks and replaced it by 'Idol', and ordered letters for Saint-Nazaire to be addressed to Nazaire *tout court*. I shall refrain from quoting the long conversation and Monsieur Tic's first platinous arguments: how could the whale have swallowed Jonah? How can there be a baby without intervention by a man? And so forth. Thrusting aside these theological problems, Jurenito went straight to the heart of the matter. The foundations of our social existence are laid in heaven. Unaware of what he is doing, Monsieur Tic is dismantling the walls of his own house; he is an anarchist. This was more than the mayor could bear, he crossed the room in agitation, looked out to make sure there was no one in the next room and wound a tricolor ribbon round his waist. Why did the Egyptian slaves build the pyramids? Was it not because at the head of the pyramids there was—Monsieur Tic would forgive the expression—God? (The mayor complained of a headache.) The earthly hierarchy was maintained by the certainty of a hierarchy in heaven. If there is no God, why does Monsieur Tic own a house? Why should the house not be taken over by Lotcau, the day-labourer? How very careless

of you, Monsieur Tic! (The mayor started excusing himself: he was busy, a meeting and other things).

A week later the following item appeared in *La Croix*: 'Another Saul. A few days ago the mayor of Guirec, Monsieur Tic, known for his persecutions of the church, came to see the curé of St Antoine's and told him that the Holy Virgin had appeared to him by the Fieux brook and uttered the words "repent ere it is too late". At the beginning of June the first special train will leave for Guirec taking pilgrims to the Fieux brook. Book your seats at the editorial office.'

We went with the Teacher to see the catacombs on the Appian Way near Rome. After viewing the black, slimy passages, filling our lungs with the putrid stench and admiring an old monk who was selling the suspiciously fresh rib of some saint or other to two Bavarian peasants at a cut price, we came out on the surface. All around there was space and air; few people were to be seen. I plucked up courage and asked the Teacher what he thought of the future of religion. Jurento said: 'In the end all the bones will rot away, and so will all the gods. The cathedrals will crumble away, the prayers will be forgotten. Do not regret them. Look over there. Do you see a little foal jumping high in the air and kicking out its legs, on the plain? Doesn't he convey to you the whole boundless joy of being? And over there by that hut, there's a dog howling, its muzzle pointing to the sky, its tail dragging on the ground. Isn't all the sorrow of the earth in that howling? The men of the future will be like these. They will not lock up their feelings in vestments weighing thousands of pounds.'

You must look more often at children. What I love in them is not merely the memory of the feather-light days of humanity; in them, too, I see the prototype of the future world. I love the infant that does not yet know anything, that tries with a regal gesture to pull down—what? The brooch on his mother's breast? An apple in the garden? Or a star from the sky? Later they'll teach him how to put on his little shirt, how to kiss his daddy's hand, how to play and how to worship. Today he is

wild, empty and beautiful. If you want to learn to hate men as they should be hated, you must love children, love them dearly. Defile the sanctums, break the commandments, laugh, laugh loudly when laughing is forbidden, and with your laughter, your torment, your fire, clear a place for him who is to come, so that there should be emptiness to receive that which is empty.'