

Crowley's Introduction to *A Prophet in His Own Country*

It is a generally recognized fact that the onlooker sees most of the game. The rulers of a country make most of their mistakes because the knowledge of detail which is constantly thrust upon them is so great that it binds them to fundamental considerations. The emergencies of the moment lure them into bypaths in which they become lost. Those ancient governors who, despairing of their own judgment, consulted the oracles, were truly wise. England never made so serious a mistake as when she failed to utilize the brain of Carlyle. The tendency of all men who are immersed in affairs, whether public or private, is to become concentrated upon tactical problems, and in so doing this they lose sight of the principles of strategy. The real ruler or adviser of a nation should be a man entirely free from the expediencies of the passing day. The mischief wrought by failure to understand these facts is particularly obvious in finance. Politics, in some countries at least, is still looked after by men of broad general education; but finance is entirely in the hands of experts. Its terminology has been deliberately complicated; partly, no doubt, as in the case of law, with the idea of making it easier to hoodwink the layman; but the so-called experts themselves have become totally oblivious of the fundamental principles of their own business. Even worse, they have become ensnared by the greatest of all possible delusions; not only are they ignorant of the truth, but they believe most firmly its exact

opposite. Money appears to them the only thing of value, whereas in reality it has no value whatever. It is merely a convenient medium of exchange of commodities which have value. If it were not for this, the present system could never have been created. As things are, a piece of paper is just as good as a piece of gold; but, as everyone knows, even the financiers, ninety five per cent of the gold never existed. The possibility of calling for gold has so frightened those very people who have been screaming for years that gold was the only basis, that already there has been a threat to demonetize gold. This is no vain threat. It is quite possible and will almost certainly be necessary; though probably the process will be carried out by some trick which will conceal the fact from the people. But you cannot demonetize wheat, or coal, or copper, and any one who possesses these things can call for anything he likes in payment for them, and be sure of getting it. But the financiers of the day avoid all consideration of the enormous calamity threatened by the present situation. They are only excited by perfectly trivial and temporary events, such as small movements in the value of stocks. It never occurs to them that the most trifling shifts in the real economic situation may reduce the value of stocks to nothing at all. The history of finance has always been the history of more or less desperate efforts to hide these facts. And the drastic expedients adopted at the beginning of the war shew clearly enough in what delicate scales the business of the world is weighed.

Now, whenever a crisis occurs in the affairs of the world, it is imperative that they should be examined *de novo* by a mind which has never lost sight of fundamentals. The expert becomes useless at such times for the very reason that he is an expert. Temporary expedients will not serve. As a matter of fact, this is always more or less subconsciously recognized by the good sense of the people. The hopes which were excited by the election of Mr. Wilson to the presidency were based entirely on the fact that he was not a professional politician. In the same way, in England, to take a recent example, Edward VII was trusted and respected by the people principally because he had won the Derby. The instinct of democracy is always sound; its mistakes are due to that instinct being overlaid by the partial development of its intellect, which too often leads it wrong. But in moments of calm it invariably distrusts the appeals which are made to its cupidity or its cowardice; and it much prefers its affairs to be in the hands of ordinary, sensible men of the world. The political tragedy of England today is largely due to the replacing of the good, old-fashioned, honest statesmen, like Lord Salisbury (stupid as he was) by clever and ambitious nobodies like Rufus Isaacs and Lloyd George. It seems just possible that the present catastrophe which has overwhelmed Europe and threatens to engulf civilization entire may arouse the deepest instincts of the people, and cause them to appeal to the only types of men who can save them—the Prophet and the Poet. America has no Poet, and may be counted exceedingly fortunate

in possessing a Prophet of the first class: Mr. Henry Clifford Stuart.

Imagine to yourself a big man, a really big man, six foot three in height, broad and well-proportioned. The entire impression is of bigness. And as should always be the case with homo sapiens, the most important part of the impression is given by the head. Such a brow is only seen in the world's greatest thinkers.

Mr. Stuart was born in 1864 in Brooklyn, N.Y. His father, John Stuart, was a Captain of the 51st and Lieutenant Colonel of the 63rd New York Volunteers. His is the perfect and ideal type, fast disappearing, of the aristocratic American. Mr. Stuart was educated in San Francisco, California; but it is one of his favorite claims that he is not educated. Rather, he would say, he is beginning to educate himself. And this is one of the secrets of his immense power of brain. By education in the ordinary sense we mean that an old fool bullies a young fool into agreeing with him. In order to obtain a university degree it is necessary to stultify oneself by agreeing with the particular clique of fifth rate minds who, having been totally unable to carve out any way in the world, have become sodden in the backwater of a university; and taken up teaching as a profession, because they are incapable of learning. One has only to think of a subject like history to see how lop-sided conventional education always is. Even in more truly scientific subjects there is the same parochialism. Consider Sir William Hamilton and his doctrine of the quantification of the predicate,

which everybody in Edinborough in his time had to accept, or fail in the examination, but which every other school in Europe regarded as nonsense. Such training can only serve to unbalance and destroy the mind. Mr. Stuart avoided this tragedy. Instead, he read everything, kept his eyes open, and never allowed the specious arguments of the logician to lure him into conclusions opposed to common sense. Almost every writer falls into some trap. Either he omits a premise, or takes a false one, or commits some logical error unperceived. But with such skill does he execute his sophistry, and so deeply does his vanity flatter him, that even the most careful revision fails to discover the error. Consequently, humanity is always the prey of deceptions. Think for example of the arguments in favor of vegetarianism. It is impossible to refute them. At the same time they are totally invalid, because they neglect one single, small, but all-important fact: "Man is a carnivorous animal." The calibre of Mr. Stuart's mind is such that he is incapable of being hoodwinked by any mere arguments, however clever, cogent, and convincing. He invariably applies the standard of truth, intuitive or instinctive, to the conclusion. And if there be a contradiction, he perceives it instantly. A brain of this kind is peculiarly useful in America, where the people are the slaves of false logic. In transplanting themselves from their native soil, they have left behind them their greatest possession: inherited race knowledge. I have never yet met a stupid American. But Mr. Stuart is almost the only one whom I have met who was not silly. No people are

so quick to perceive the meaning of what is said, or so eager to listen to what may be said, but they judge entirely by what is said: they have no standard of atavistic experience to tell them whether it is right or wrong. The most ignorant peasant in Europe, who firmly believes in ghosts and vampires and werewolves, who cannot read or write, has never travelled beyond the radius of twenty miles from his hamlet, and knows nothing of his country's affairs, much less of the world's, could never be so insensible to the facts of human nature as Henry Ford. You could argue with him "til all was blue," but you would never even begin to persuade him. He would know it was all nonsense, just in the same way as you cannot fool a dog about a tramp. It is true that this instinct is sometimes wrong after all in certain minor matters, because now and then conditions do change. But in all fundamental points humanity has not altered since the cave man. A friend of mine was arguing the other day about this very matter. "Nowadays," said his opponent, "if you want a girl, you cannot twist your knuckles in her hair, Club her, and drag her bleeding to your cave." "No," said my friend, "things have changed a great deal since the eighth of July!"

It is just this capacity for seeing everything *sub specie aeternitatis* which distinguishes the great artist or the great seer, even to a certain extent the great statesman, from plausible imitations. We do not value Shakespeare's histories for their political views; in fact, the portrait of Joan of Arc is a stain upon the character of the poet which no ages can efface. (But the English always blackguard gallant

enemies.) The merit of the histories lies almost entirely in the character of Falstaff, who has nothing to do with the period. And the political errors of Shakespeare show how difficult it is, even for one who has the vision of the eternal, to keep straight when he comes to deal with the temporal. But the explanation is that Shakespeare was a snob, the lackey of debauched noblemen, without virility or independence of character. Courage is certainly the first of the virtues, for without it none of the others can be exercised. In the case of statesmen a little more latitude must be allowed, because they are compelled to deal with the conditions of the moment. But, even there, the best epithet that can be applied in praise of such a man is that he is far-sighted; and the way to be far-seeing is to refuse to be obsessed by the expediencies of the hour. And while it is of course impossible to make every particular conform to the general, it can at least be arranged that it should not be in flagrant contradiction to the first principles.

As a concrete example, the annexation of conquered countries. Economic or military reasons have often been allowed to over-ride considerations of the will of the inhabitants. Such acts have almost invariable cause trouble later on, and such trouble frequently extends far beyond the territory in dispute. The injury to the fingertip poisons the whole body. The Germans in 1870, when asked whom they were fighting, replied: "Louis XIV." And it was because that monarch tried to extend his dominions that they, at this present moment of writing, are invaded. The need of an independent

mind in dealing with all such matters is evident. Not only must the statesman be a philosopher, but he should also have in his composition not a little of the mystic. We do not use the word mystic in the specialized sense, in which it is too often employed today. The true mystic is one who sees all phenomena without bias, prejudice, self-interest, or obfuscation. In thinking of kingdoms, he thinks of spiritual kingdoms; and here again we must use the word spiritual in its oldest and widest sense. In such kingdoms faith is more than frontiers, language and literature more than markets. Ireland has been systematically depopulated; every engine of oppression has been set in motion against her; but she has never been conquered and never can be conquered, because the Anglo-Saxon can never get her point of view. In the same way India has overcome every one of her invaders in turn, though she has never been able to resist even the least of them successfully by arms. The English in India have become, within two generations, more Indian than the Indians themselves, in many important respects, particularly in that of caste. In the case of South Africa it is once again evident how far more vital than material considerations are the spiritual. The Boers, driven from one settlement to another by the most barefaced treachery and tyranny, and finally conquered in their last stronghold by invading armies outnumbering them twenty to one, were yet able to reconquer their country for themselves, without a drop of bloodshed, within a decade of the fall of Pretoria.

But in order to perceive the rights and wrongs of all such matters independence of mind is just as necessary as clearness of vision. When the man can be influenced by considerations of his own welfare, when hope and fear find any place in his mind, he is no longer to be trusted. The only man who can fulfil this condition is the prophet. (It must be remembered that the functions of poet and prophet were originally identical. The distinction between them is the artificial one of form. The states of mind are identical.) A true prophet lives only by virtue of his inner vision. He is responsible to what he calls God, and to nothing and nobody else. Such men are rare, as are all other types of genius. And it is the innate perception of this fact that causes the people to look for prophets always, but most especially in times of crisis. For this reason also false prophets abound. It is only natural that the valuable should be counterfeited. But the test of the true prophet is a very simple one. It is the independence of his mind. False prophets are venal, time-servers, flatterers. They make it a rule to say what other people wish to hear. They have no grasp of fundamentals, of essentials, of the spiritual truths that lie beneath the accidental and temporary phenomena which obsess other minds. They are also characterized by simplicity. There is no sophistication in their intellect. When they add up two and two it always makes four.

Even when you have your true prophet, however, it is commonly found that there are difficulties in using him. Firstly, his uncompromising directness, and the fierce quality

in him, need tempering with tact; or seem to do so. Secondly, his utterances are often obscure, or seem to be obscure. They are not really so. But where a thoroughly sophisticated mind, nursed on false premises and schooled in sophistries, receives the impact of the prophetic intelligence, it is bewildered by the simplicity of that intelligence. One is reminded of the story of charlatans who proposed to weave for the emperor a robe which should be visible only to the innocent. They made no robe at all. But the emperor and all his ministers had to pretend that they saw one; and the fraud passed undetected until a child in the street cried out: "But the King is naked!" Nowadays, however, people are not so easily undeceived. The child would very likely not be understood. The word "naked" is not in the vocabulary of the fashionable dressmaker; besides which, the word is improper. We know that there are no such things! So that even if a dawning perception of the meaning of the prophet strikes the more enlightened minds, it is often put aside with a sort of horror; although that word has been awaited with yearning and anxiety.

Now it must be confessed that this objection does to some extent apply to the writings which we have under consideration. Mr. Stuart's style is as difficult as Wagner's or Whistler's were to their contemporaries. We have acquiesced so long in the false meanings which have been placed upon the simplest words by those whose interest it is to deceive us, that when those words are used in their proper, simple sense, we hardly recognize them. For this reason we have deemed it necessary to

comment in various places upon these letters. It is also to be remarked how curious a form Mr. Stuart has chosen for the expression of his thoughts. It is simple, attractive, and convenient, and possesses the great advantage that his messages are automatically dated.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton, in one of his books, I think that on Browning, has remarked upon the utter futility of language. It is impossible to express thought, unless the person who is to receive it has already some inkling of what is meant. For example, if I say that someone is a Puritan, the remark may be taken as a complement or as an insult, according to the ideas in the mind of the reader, or of his ideas as to what my ideas may be. Unless the context makes it clear, doubt is certain to remain. Nor need one suppose that there are any words free from this ambiguity. Everything at one time or another has been the subject of violent praise and violent blame. If any one asks me for the meaning of the word God, I must first know whether the word is being used by the Pope or Mr. G. W. Foote or Herbert Spencer or Billy Sunday. If you ask me for the meaning of the word "soul," I am equally at a loss. To the Buddhist it is a figment of the imagination of certain Hindu philosophers. The Qabalists use it as almost synonymous with "body." Every metaphysician that ever lived has used this word in a different sense, and has nearly always forgotten to define it. Now if, to bring back the matter to the question of Mr. Stuart and his letters to the universe, we find in one of them the word "gold," we may be too ready to assume that

something extremely valuable and painfully inaccessible is meant. The same difficulties constantly recur. These letters require profound study. Not because the thoughts are obscure—for it is not so, it is exceedingly simple—but because it is new. The average individual is brought up in certain beliefs, and any examination of these beliefs is positively discouraged. When fundamentals are attacked by a new thinker, people are completely thrown off their balance. At first they refuse to believe that they have heard aright. When it was first stated that the earth went around the sun, no notice was taken, because it was too absurd for discussion. It was only explanation of, and insistence on, the statement, that began to arouse enmity. Now, the kind of obscurity which arises from the fact that the hearer has nothing in his mind which would make him capable of understanding what was being said to him is not avoidable. The classical example of this is the translation of the Buddhist canon by the missionaries. They started with the conviction that the Buddhist *must* believe in a soul more or less like the Christian soul, and that Nirvana, being apparently some sort of place of residence not upon the earth, must be a variety of heaven. The result was of course a total misunderstanding of Buddhism. It was seen that the context did not square in any way with these conceptions, and the missionaries thereupon had the impudence to assume that the Buddhist was being illogical and self-contradictory.

It is really necessary to hear Mr. Stuart rather than read him. When he speaks he is transfigured

before you. The placid power of the man gives place to elemental energy. Both aspects remind one of the sea. It seems almost as if he grew physically much bigger. His personality fills the room. I have heard many of the great orators of the day, never one with one tithe of the passion and power of Mr. Stuart. Ben Tillett comes nearest. But Ben Tillett wastes his power in furious gesture. With Mr. Stuart the thunder of his tread and of his voice shake the house; but there is no loss of self-control. The speech is not diffuse, but extraordinarily concise and emphatic. The words rush out like molten steel from a converter under the blast. But each phrase is succinct and concentrated. For this reason, perhaps, he could never make a popular speaker. People like to have a man drone on pleasantly for an hour or so with mild excitement. They do not care to be swept away or crushed by real eloquence. Yet this is the kind of speech which has always moved men from the beginning of the world, and always will. It cannot be prolonged. Twenty minutes of it, and the nerve-force of every hearer would be exhausted. He would be mad to get up and do something; and that something would be what Mr. Stuart told him. But the old ideal of oratory has passed. Mark Anthony's speech would be rather bad form. People do not want to be moved to do more than pass a nicely worded resolution. But if a real crisis should arise in the affairs of the nation, then would come the moment of the genuine prophet. With a force not his own, but cosmic and elemental, he would sweep away the cobwebs of the old ideas, the accepted sophistries of

centuries. His words would be hurled forth, thunderbolts new forged from the smithy of Almighty God. And they would smite the hearer with such suddenness and vehemence that his inertia would not even find time to begin to operate.

The present is such a moment. But people are not aware of it; they are still listening to the false prophets who prophesy smooth things. The critical situation of the world at present lies not in Europe. Europe's fate is known. It lies in America and China. The attention of every man of even the smallest degree of foresight should be concentrated on this fact. It is emphasized clearly enough in these letters. And the great merit of Mr. Stuart's vision is that he saw these things in their entirety long before any other man had even begun to think about them.

Another difficulty which arises in connection with prophets is that, although they may see as clearly as never was, and even express themselves in language suited to the understanding of the common people, or even to that (immeasurably inferior) of the so-called educated man, there is yet a question as to whether their word can be carried into effect. The prophet has usually been content to speak: to leave the responsibility of action with his hearers. Very rarely do we hear of a true prophet being a great administrator. Here once more America is fortunate. this is probable the greatest crisis that has ever occurred in the history of the world; and infinitely wise, all-seeing nature has provided against catastrophe by combining these two rare faculties in a single brain.

All his life, until the last five years, Mr. Stuart has been a man of affairs. He went to work at fourteen years of age under his father, and was gradually compelled to do the work of both, with the result that before his twenty-first birthday he had become freight traffic manager for Central America's most important railroad. He has also been in charge of various consular and diplomatic offices from time to time. He was land commissioner of the Panama Railroad; and has also been in the real estate and mining businesses, and factor of an important shipping company. He brought the Salvadore Railway Company out of bankruptcy, and reorganized the Port of Champerico. He has also been general counselor for Spanish-American affairs in New York City.

But it is not only the able administration of such matters that proves the capacity of a man. Many a muddler has gone through public life on the shoulders of competent subordinates without too great a loss of reputation. But there is one sterling and indubitable proof of the administrator. If he orders his own house well, it is certain that what reputation he may have made in public affairs is a deserved one.

I have never met any man with the sense of order so admirably developed as Mr. Stuart. He can lay his hands on any scrap of paper at a moment's notice. Every book in his shelves has its proper place. His house is fitted with every convenience and even luxury, yet entirely without ostentation or extravagance. Nor is the order in which things are kept a visible order. No one would suspect it. It is

only on investigation that it appears. The German plan is there in all its efficiency and completeness, yet there is none of the German manner which, by insisting upon its own excellence so audibly, lashes the Anglo-Saxon who beholds it into a state of such speechless rage. Everything has become subconscious. It is as if Mr. Stuart possessed instinctively that supreme method described by the Chinese under the title "The Way of the Tao." "Consciousness is a symptom of disease. All that moves well moves without will. All skillfulness, all strain, all intention is contrary to ease." Unless this method is actually seen in operation, it is almost incomprehensible. Yet it is the only key to true and perfect success. The Chinese express it in another way. They say: "Do everything by doing nothing." The only way in which we can bring this idea at all near to western minds is by speaking of perfect balance, in the sense in which the fencer or the chess player might use the term. In a perfectly played game of chess the pieces are not arranged so that there is any obvious line of attack or defense. They are arranged so as to be ready to attack or defend in any position of the board. A definite attack upon the king's side or the queen's side, or upon a pawn or a piece, compromises the position. The player is bound, to a certain extent, by his expressed intention. Such attacks frequently succeed; but only because the opponent has already made a still greater mistake, has failed in sound development in some one point. Of this method Mr. Stuart shows absolute command in his domestic affairs. And his proposals for dealing with the

greatest social and international problems are equally deep and dulcet. He would not put anything right. He would gently rearrange things so that they went right of their own accord.

Evidences of such proposals are to be found in these amazing letters. Let the reader then consider carefully this matter. Let him understand that in Mr. Stuart we have not merely the wise man, or the strong man, or the good man, but the necessary man. The eyes are clear, the heart is pure, and the hand works in entire harmony with them. When the anarchy which exists in this country becomes obvious to its people, and the dictator is required to bring order out of chaos, they have only to turn to the portrait at the commencement of this volume, and exclaim: *Ecce Homo!*