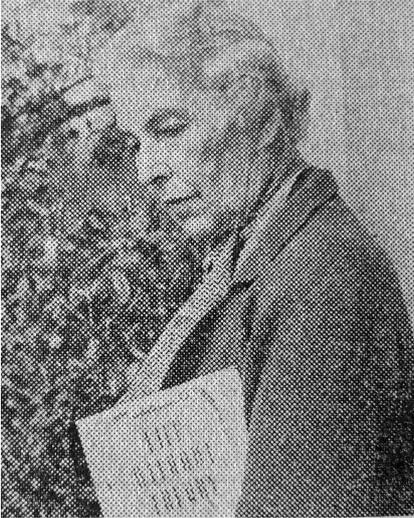


# The Hon. Mrs. Stuart Wortley C.B.E.

"Christchurch Times" Reporter 1948



When the Hon. Mrs. Violet Stuart Wortley, C.B.E., of Highcliffe Castle, sat down to write her book "Life Without Theory" she did not have to indulge in any flights of imagination.

It is an autobiography crammed with facts fascinatingly recalled, and anyone who has read it must feel that it records the story of an exceedingly full life.

There is no need to go much further than the contents of this book to realise that Mrs. Stuart Wortley's life has been one long succession of unique experiences. One literary critic sums up thus: "As the years went on, she was to see many kings, queens, emperors, princesses; many politicians, diplomats, military leaders; but she saw them not so much as famous figureheads but as human being's."

## COMPLETE UNDERSTANDING

From the following few highlights of "Life Without Theory" it will be seen that Mrs. Stuart Wortley combines an ability to mix with kings and princes with a complete understanding of the simpler folk.

"I was born to the sound of guns and the clamour of war, in 1866, the year of Prussia's assault on Austria," she starts her story, and in the following 150 pages come vivid recollections of extensive travels throughout Europe and the Middle East, the meeting of most of the crowned heads and leading statesmen of the past 70 years, but in the end she reveals that the ordinary men and women around her have never been from her thoughts.

## THE VILLAGE PARTY

As evidence of this, take her description of a village party at Highcliffe Castle at the close of this last war. This is what she wrote: "When the war had ended, and it seemed apparent that no one from the War Office, the Home Office, or for that matter, from any ministry, or even the Lord Lieutenant of the county, intended coming down to congratulate the inhabitants of Highcliffe upon their war effort, it was decided that 'Thank you' should be expressed by ourselves to ourselves . . . The Castle glowed with light and warmth that winter afternoon as we held our village party. Sadness was banished. Human nature we saw, as if anew, revealed as composed, for the most part, of good, honest ingredients, with here and there a touch of the noblest elements. War had left us better fellow-citizens than it had found us."

## A SIMPLE CHILDHOOD

Mrs. Stuart Wortley writes and speaks with pride of the simplicity of her childhood. "I was fortunate to be born in the Victorian era when family prayers were the custom," she said at a meeting recently.

Daughter of "a Scot to the marrow", she says in her book that the first notable figures to imprint themselves on her mind were the dethroned Emperor Napoleon III and the Empress Eugenie, whom she saw at Ryde in 1871.

Outstanding in her memory, too, is the Visit to Highcliffe Castle in 1907 of the Kaiser. "... This was a holiday for him," she says. "Seldom before had he been so untrammelled by the laws of

etiquette and the cast iron system of the Prussian Court. I felt that his spirits were like those of a schoolboy released from school."

Married in 1891 to Edward James Montagu Stuart Wortley, second son of the Hon. Francis Stuart Wortley, nephew of the first Earl of Wharnccliffe, Mrs. Stuart Wortley, in spite of her extensive travels, is a great believer in family life, and her children, Rothesay, Louise (Lady Loraine) and Bettine (Countess of Abingdon) have shared many of her experiences.

#### BELIEVER IN FAMILY LIFE

Coming to more parochial activities, Mrs. Stuart Wortley was founder, and has been chairman of the Highcliffe Nursing Association since its inception 50 years ago. In the early 1930s she was a Justice of the Peace, and has also held the offices of County Commissioner for the Girl Guides and chairman of the Highcliffe Conservative Association. She has done a great deal of work for the Y.M.C.A., of which she was chairman of the National Women's Auxiliary Committee.

Mrs. Stuart Wortley still feels that she has much interesting information to pass on, and perhaps that is why she is now engaged in writing yet another book. "Magic in the Distance" is its title. It is a chronicle of five generations, and will be published in October.