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Lord Willingdon

Certain popular sayings warn us to look out when all men praise us, and tell us that a prophet, however well he may stand with the world at large, has no honor in his own country. Lord Willingdon must be one of the exceptions to the general application of these rules for those anywhere who do not speak well of him must be few, and those in his own country—in his home district—who do not give him honor simply do not exist.

Alike in his private relationships and in his public life he bears the character of a courteous and high-principled English gentleman, and from friend or stranger he could have no better certificate. In the County of Sussex, in which practically all his domestic interests are centred, his position is unsailable. The people of Canada will be glad to know that this is how he stands among his own folk. In his public career they are perhaps able to judge him for themselves. They know that already he has "done the State some service." Also, doubtless, they are informed on the variety of the activities which have helped to build up for him an excellent reputation. He is known as student, sportsman, soldier, courtier, parliamentarian, Minister, States Governor and diplomatic missioner; in fact he has played many parts—all with a good measure of success, and some with such marked distinction as to earn the warm approval of his countrymen and a share of Royal honors. As is well known he was last spring engaged on a State mission to the Far East, helping on behalf of his Government to smooth out the difficulties of administering the millions involved in the return of the Boxer Rebellion indemnities.

It will hardly be soon forgotten that in January last Lord Willingdon was on his way across Canada to China on this mission—a journey which he has declared was most instructive and enjoyable—rumors were circulating in the Dominion that he was designed to succeed Lord Byng of Vimy at Ottawa, and that when interviewed on the subject he answered the press representative in the language of diplomacy, though his reply was regarded as being "in the negative." Events have proved that in these rumors there was more significance and truth than was at the time apparent.

Successful men in politics and diplomacy are often deeply indebted to nature and culture for their achievements. In these respects Lord Willingdon, when he set out to make a name for himself, had advantages over most. He is tall and distinguished-looking and of dignified bearing, and with these physical characteristics he combines ripe intellectual attainments, and a charm of manner which all who come in contact with him find captivating. In education, training and influence he represents Eton and Cambridge at their best, and his record on the playing fields both of school and university proves that both helped to possess him of that true spirit of sportsmanship which becomes the man of affairs better than any arts of diplomacy.

As already indicated, the new Governor-General is very much at home and popular in the beautiful maritime county of Sussex, especially in its Eastern part which embraces not only the home of his youth but also his place of entry into Parliamentary life, the borough of Hastings, fashionable now as a health and holiday resort, but notable also in history as the principal of the ancient Cinque Ports group, to say nothing of its outlook over Pevensey Bay, the traditional landing spot of William the Conqueror, and of its associations with the decisive battle following that invasion. Moreover at or about Hastings Lord Willingdon found a wife, as there will be occasion again to mention.

Freeman-Thomas— for so was the new Governor-General named before he joined the ranks of the peers—comes of good stock long identified with Sussex, his father being Frederick Freeman-Thomas, of Ralton and Yaptun, Willingdon, and his mother Mabel, daughter of the first Viscount Hampden, a former speaker of the House of Commons. Lord Willingdon assumed the additional surname of Freeman in 1892, in which year also he married the Hon. (afterwards Lady) Marie Adelaide, daughter of the first Baron Brassey, afterwards Earl Brassey. He was born Sept. 12, 1856, and was an only son. Two sons have been born to him. The elder, Gerard Frederick, born in 1893, went to the war as a lieutenant in the Coldstream Guards, and was killed in action in 1914. The surviving son, and heir to his father's peerage, is Hon. Hugo Brassey Freeman-Thomas, who was born July 25, 1899, and married in 1924 Maxine, daughter of the eminent actor, Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson.

Lord Willingdon's inherited political faith was Liberal, and he himself in his Parliamentary days

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adhered to Liberalism, which was indeed the creed of all those who claimed kinship with him—his wife's family as well as his own. But he had no passion for politics, as may be inferred from the fact that he was 34 years of age before he reached the House of Commons. Probably such predilections as he had for a political career may be traced more to the maternal than the paternal side of his family. The political strain in his mother's blood it may be assumed was very strong, for her father when H. B. W. Brand fought many battles in the constituencies before the Liberals placed him in the Speaker's chair. One can well imagine that the example of his maternal grandfather, and that of his father-in-law, who was a star of considerable magnitude in the political firmament, had much influence in eventually turning Mr. Freeman-Thomas's steps in the direction of Westminster, for which he was elected in 1900. That seat had been occupied by his father-in-law (then Sir Thomas Brassey) from 1868 to 1888, when he was raised to the peerage as Baron Brassey, an honor that was followed by an Earldom in 1911.

Sound as were his own merits, Mr. Freeman-Thomas doubtless owed some part of his success in this election to the Brassey influence, at that period all-powerful in Hastings. Lord Brassey was the head of a family which in the course of a generation had taken firm root in the Sussex soil, had built themselves a palace called Normanhurst, near Battle, and had both socially and officially become leaders in the district. The founder of the family fortunes, Thomas Brassey, who amassed great wealth as a contractor for the building of railways, canals and the like, was one of the most famous specimens of England's self-made men of the early 19th Century. Lord Brassey was in several ways a great man. No man of his time was a more active figure in public and political life, no man cultivated a broader or more varied field of endeavor—intellectual and practical—and a scholar, scientist, and man of affairs his record of achievement was remarkable. Some of his best work was done at the Admiralty where he was at different times Civil Lord and Secretary. He wrote much on naval matters, was the founder and first editor of the "Naval Annual" and was a practical seaman, holding a Board of Trade master's certificate. Everybody knows that he was the owner of one of the most celebrated yachts in the world, the Subseam. This vessel which had been seen on nearly all the seven seas, was in 1916 presented to the Government of India as a hospital ship. Locally Lord Brassey was relatively as great a man as he was nationally, and naturally his association with Hastings was something to conjure with at all times. Even from the historic and most ancient and honorable office of Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports—an appointment particularly coveted—he was not excluded. The peerage did not long exist after the death of the first holder. At the death of his son, the second Earl, in 1919 it became extinct.

The versatile Lord Brassey, it should be mentioned, was Governor of Victoria, Australia, from 1895 to 1900, and during that period his son-in-law served as his aide-de-camp. It was immediately after his return from this first official experience overseas that Mr. Freeman-Thomas captured Hastings. This borough he continued to represent until 1906, when he was defeated and transferred his services to the Boamin Division of Cornwall, for which he was the Parliamentary representative until 1910.

That year saw the end of his career in the House of Commons on his being given a peerage, but his Parliamentary activities were continued in the House of Lords until he was selected for the Governorship of Bombay. He succeeded to India in 1913 and did not finally return home until 1924. During the first half of this period he governed the Bombay presidency with such conspicuous ability that at the end of his term of office the Government was very anxious to retain his services in India, and he was persuaded to accept the Governorship of the Madras presidency. In this office he remained until 1924, when he retired with a greatly enhanced reputation for skill in handling Indian problems, and difficult native character.

The success of his work in India was signalized by his promotion to the rank of Viscount. He had previously been honored with the highest decorations of the orders of the Indian Empire, the British Empire and the Star of India. He is also a Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem in England. This honor Viscountess Willingdon shares as a Lady of Grace. She is also G. B. E. (Civil Division) and the British Empire Order (Civil Division) and holds the Kaisar-i-Hind Gold Medal, First Class.

A pleasant incident marking the home-coming of Lord Willingdon from India was the conference upon him by his old constituents, and neighbors, in Hastings, of the freedom of their borough, and last year—on July 16—the continuance of the friendship between them was further manifested in his lordship being selected to represent the town in the ceremony attending the restoration to Canada of the Quebec Shield, a trophy which was brought from the gates of Quebec by Major Murray, the first British governor, and presented by him to the borough of Hastings. In exchange for the shield Canada presented to Hastings a replica, to hang in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall, where the original was so long an object of interest to visitors. In the ceremony the



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Canadian High Commissioner (Hon. P. C. Larkin), the French Ambassador (M. Fleuriot), Lord Clarendon (representing the Colonial Office), the Mayor of Hastings and other prominent persons took part, the event serving as the occasion of a remarkable demonstration of pro-Canadian feeling, to which Lord Willingdon's speech in handing over the shield was a leading contribution.

It is one word more that may be said it is that Lord Willingdon's heraldic motto proclaims his own belief "Honesty is the best policy".

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ITS BICYCLES IN FRANCE

FRANCE, Oct. 15.—Bicycles become more popular in France each year. There is now one bicycle for every seven inhabitants, "wheels" being about as common in France as automobiles are in the United States.

In Paris alone there are almost half a million. The latest figures show 6,763,854 bicycles in France, an increase of almost 400,000 in twelve months.