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INDIAN AFFAIRS AT HOME

LORD WILLINGDON'S DESIRES

(From Our Own Correspondent.)

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When next New Year's Day comes the question of selection of a successor to the Viceregal throne, if not then settled, will be urgent. Already there are confident statements in one newspaper after another as to the choice to be made. But it is evident that with many weighty decisions to be taken, Mr. Baldwin will not make his nomination many months before the necessity to do so arises. Four years ago there were the most positive statements that the choice had fallen on the then Governor of Madras, Lord Willingdon, and both he and Lady Willingdon were the recipients of a large number of premature telegraphic and other messages of congratulation. There can be little doubt that, even after eleven years of satrapy, Lord Willingdon would welcome further opportunities of service to India.

A casual remark he made in an impromptu speech at the annual dinner of the Indian Students' Union and Hostel is worth noting in this connexion. Speaking of the Indian dishes and the general Indian atmosphere of a lively gathering, Lord Willingdon said the occasion reminded him and Lady Willingdon of the very happy days they had spent in India. The welcome given him made him feel, in spite of the dreary weather, quite warm again. He felt that once more he was basking in the Indian sun which he missed so much in a climate where the sun was so little seen. He must confess to an extraordinary desire to go back to India before long to bask in her sunshine and to get warm again. With the hearty approbation of his young hearers he went on to condemn the pessimism regarding India which he found in many quarters on his return to this country. He expressed the confidence that during 1925 the feelings of trust and confidence between "our two races" would improve in a marked degree and would be stronger than for some years past.

Presentation Portraits

The war services of Lord and Lady Willingdon are recalled by the invitations issued by Lieut.-General Sir William Marshall, late G. O. C. the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force and other subscribers to view the portraits of Viscount Willingdon by Oswald Birley and of Viscountess Willingdon by P. de Laszlo at the Agnew Galleries in Old Bond Street. The exhibition will extend from Jan. 5 to Jan. 17. The portraits are being presented to the distinguished sitters by all ranks of the Expeditionary Force "in appreciation of all they did for the benefit of that Force during the War 1914-1918." In this connection it is worth while to quote from "Forty Years a Soldier" by General Sir George Young-husband, who was a brigade commander in the operations for the relief of Kut. He writes "It is wonderful how little touches tell. We were spending Christmas on the Tigris, and none of us were really very happy, and some of us were ill. Nor was there very much of Christmas fare. But away in Bombay was a very kind lady with a heart of gold. And this kind lady, with that sort of second sight and far-feeling sympathy which mere men seldom have, seemed to foresee what our Christmas would be. She therefore used her influence, which happily was great, for she was Lady Willingdon, to ensure that the Christmas presents, which she and other ladies in India sent for us, should reach us." He goes on to say that the task was far from easy and how delighted all ranks were with the plum puddings. The little Christmas card which accompanied each gift was simple, but on the Tigris, that tragic winter, it hit the tender chord that bound all together. The inscription was "Our thoughts and our prayers are with you." The General adds that he blessed Lady Willingdon and has kept the card ever since.