

## THE CROWN PRINCE OF SIAM IN HIS ENGLISH HOME.

By DAYRELL TRELAWNEY.

THE King of Siam has shown himself to be a far-seeing ruler and wise father, in unselfishly parting with his two sons for the period necessary to complete their education in England.

The Crown Prince of Siam, and his brother, Prince Aphakara, are being quietly but thoroughly educated by private tutors in their temporary home at North Lodge, Ascot, under the governorship of Mr. Basil Thomson. So unostentatiously have all the arrangements been made for the residence of the two young Princes among us, that comparatively little has transpired as to their home life at Ascot, and the progress of their English education and training.

When I received an invitation to North Lodge, I accepted it with a full realisation of the interest of such a visit, and an anticipation of the pleasure of renewing my friendship with Mr. Thomson, whom I have known all my life, but whose work for the Colonial Office has taken him for some years out of England.

North Lodge (the original structure of which has been considerably added to) presents a very picturesque appearance from the outside. The house, which is built of red brick, is almost entirely overgrown with ivy and creepers. A raised terrace, bordered by standard roses, runs round two sides of the building, and on to this open the low French windows of the drawing-room. Trim lawns and gay flower-beds stretch beyond the terrace to where a great bordering of shrubs and evergreens screens the drive from view; while further still is a background of tall pine and fir trees.

Inside, the house is a delightful, rambling, home-like country residence. The large entrance-hall is lofty and well proportioned; in the centre is a full-sized billiard table. The walls are lined with handsome groups of arms, and curios collected by Mr. B. Thomson during his official residence in New Guinea, Fiji, and Tonga. One corner of this hall has been turned into a studio by Mrs. Thomson,

and a clever figure-study on the easel shows that she has considerable artistic powers.

A second hall has a staircase leading to the upper rooms, and is connected with the main, or entrance hall, by a quaint window opening in the wall. On every side are skins, arms, and trophies, collected one by one during many years of travel. To the right of the hall lie the dining-room, morning-room, and Mr. Basil Thomson's study. The most pleasant room in the house is the long drawing-room, with its low window-seats, divans, and chairs covered with light chintzes. Personally, my views about drawing-rooms are unorthodox; but here, at least, I found a room that combined all the charms of a boudoir and study. A writing-table at which you can write, an arm-chair in which you can sit, and, better still, books and papers that are readable and interesting, all combine to make this room an ideal one.

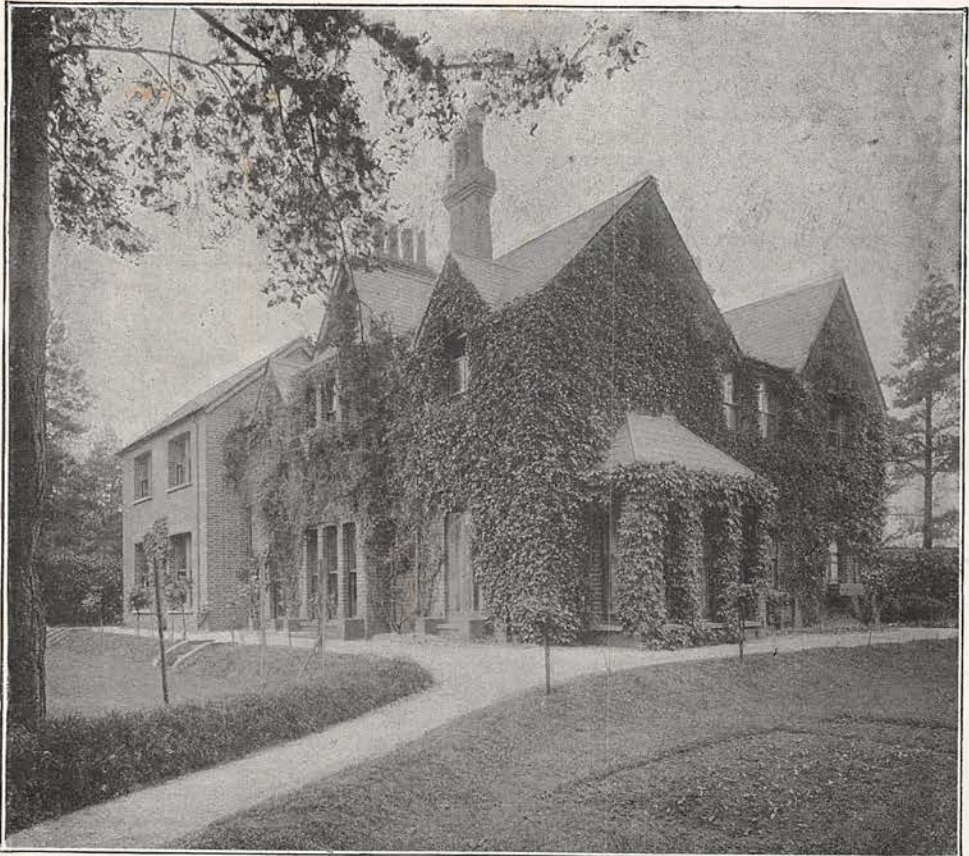
A very handsome carved cabinet, the reliefs quaintly gilt, attracted my attention. This turned the conversation on to Brittany, where the cabinet came from, and I was taken upstairs to see a magnificent set of carved oak, consisting of a four-poster bed, a linen press, and a cradle, all recently brought from Brittany, and very fine specimens of the kind they are.

Mr. Thomson, who is now well known to the public as the author of "South Sea Yarns" and "The Diversions of a Prime Minister," is a son of the late Archbishop Thomson of York. He has, for so young a man, had a career of singular promise and even brilliancy. He commenced work under the Colonial Office as a stipendiary magistrate in Fiji. Upon the annexation of New Guinea he became private secretary to Sir William McGregor, the first administrator, and accompanied him in 1888 on a seven months' yachting cruise, tracking down and bringing to justice murderers and disturbers of the public peace, whose numbers had at this time seriously increased. The good effects of



this procedure are to be felt even in the present day. Formerly it had been the custom to send an English gun-boat to demand that the murderer be given up, and it is needless to add that the wrong man was not infrequently handed over. In 1889 Mr. Thomson was invalided home for a year, at the end of which period he was appointed by Sir John Thurston,

The suggestion of the appointment to Tonga emanated from the King himself, whose acquaintance Mr. Thomson had made on a former visit to the islands. I do not propose to deal more fully with this interesting period of Mr. Thomson's career, of which he has told us much in his own words in his last book, "The Diversions of a Prime Minister." It will



NORTH LODGE, ASCOT, WHERE THE CROWN PRINCE OF SIAM RESIDES WITH HIS GOVERNOR.

*Photo by Russell, Baker Street.*

Governor of Fiji, to the responsible position of adviser and virtual Prime Minister of Tonga. Sir John Thurston is reputed to have a more perfect knowledge of natives and their requirements than any man alive, and Mr. Thomson has in these respects followed closely in his footsteps. His anthropological knowledge is of no mean order, and the secret of successful colonisation, the pride of the English nation, lies in the hands of such men as these, who have lived the very life of the people they are sent at once to serve and protect.

suffice to say that his official work in Tonga was brought to a very successful close.

In appointing Mr. Thomson as Governor to the Prince Royal and his brother, the King of Siam has chosen a man well calculated to fill the post. When it is remembered that the Crown Prince will probably at some future date be the sole ruler over from eight to ten millions of people, in a land where autocracy is a reality, not a myth, it is easy to realise that the post of Governor to the young Princes is no sinecure as regards responsibilities. In the course of conversation, I



*Photo by Russell, Baker Street.*

MR. BASIL THOMSON.



learnt from Mr. Thomson that, with the exception of certain necessary modifications, such as the substitution of political economy for the study of the dead languages, etc., the two Princes were receiving a thoroughly sound European education.

The household of the Princes consists of a Siamese companion, a physician in ordinary, an English and a Siamese tutor. A French tutor will shortly be added to the number. The Princes both show

unguarded thing. I have my better feelings, and therefore I shall not record the conversation word for word; but I have also my journalistic instincts, for which reason I cannot resist saying, for the benefit of the readers of *The English Illustrated Magazine*, that two more natural-mannered, intelligent, bright-looking boys than the Crown Prince and his brother no one could wish to see.

After luncheon, a visit to the stables and to the rockery in the garden occupied some



ENTRANCE HALL OF NORTH LODGE, ASCOT.

*Photo by Russell, Baker Street.*

considerable aptitude and ability where their studies are concerned. The Crown Prince is the greater student of the two, while Prince Aphakara is keenly interested in all sport and games. I was anxious to learn how the Princes enjoyed their life in England, when the luncheon-gong sounded, and Mr. Thomson suggested that as we were about to join them, I should judge for myself.

When you trust a journalist so far as to let him sit down at table with two Princes, and a rising author, *none of whom have ever been interviewed*, you either appeal to his better feelings (if he has any) or you do a very

time. The rockery was the unaided work of the Princes and their companion, and is a very clever piece of engineering, a water-pipe having been laid from the house under the carriage-drive to supply the tank in which some goldfish take their pleasure sadly, after the manner of their kind. Every now and then one of them dies, whereupon the remains are promptly embalmed and placed in a miniature mausoleum on the banks of the rockery.

The Crown Prince has a singularly mobile, expressive face, and both he and his brother have that courteous yet dignified manner which is the special heritage of





*Photo by Russell, Baker Street.*

The Crown Prince of Siam.

Mrs. Thomson.

Miss Thomson.

A GROUP IN THE GARDEN.



the Siamese nation. It struck me in conversation that the two brothers spoke English with ease, their accent being marked, but far from unpleasant. I noticed also their complete appreciation of the general conversation going on round them, and their keen sense of humour. The following is an example of this. Mr. Russell was occupied in photographing the drawing-room, and Mr. Thomson explained to the younger of the two Princes, with some elaboration of technical detail, that if he went into the drawing-room which was under exposure his image would not be fully outlined, but a mere shadowy form. I was wondering whether the boys grasped the meaning of this, when the Crown Prince looked up with a quick smile. "It would be Aphakara's ghost," he said, a remark which was greeted with much amusement by his brother, who, with his merry laugh and mischievous pair of eyes, looks very far removed from the spirit world at present.

Upon my suggesting that I should like to have, for reproduction in *The English Illustrated Magazine*, a special portrait of the Princes and also of Mr. Basil Thomson, we adjourned to the lawn, where the photographs included in this article were taken. The large group includes, besides the Princes and their companion, Mr. and Mrs. Thomson and their little daughter, and a very pleasant picture it is. It will be seen that the Crown Prince is still in mourning for his brother; while Prince Aphakara, his half-brother (who rather regretfully doffed his blazer for the photograph) is dressed in a grey suit.

When the question arose of changing plates for more photographs, the two Princes promptly volunteered to rig up a temporary dark-room, and retired into the house with hammers and nails. In less than a quarter of an hour new plates were in the slides, and I was begging Mr. Thomson to "Stay quite still, please," in a comfortable attitude he had taken up

while chatting to me under one of the trees on the lawn. I give the result—an excellent likeness, from the crown of the hat to the tip of the cigarette—from which it will be seen that the original is, in spite of his career of heavy responsibilities, quite a young man. What no portrait can give is the pleasant laugh and cultured voice, and the genial, unaffected manner that make Mr. Thomson a welcome companion to all who know him.

Of Mrs. Thomson's experiences in Fiji and Tonga enough could be said to fill a separate article. There are few women who have had her experiences, and fewer still who could have filled successfully the positions she has held. At Tonga she rapidly established friendly relations with the officials of the Court, and with the King himself. Her tact avoided the complications which might so easily have been incurred in a position hedged in with endless difficulties and restrictions.

The evident affection which exists between the young Princes and herself is pleasant to see, and the influence of her womanly personality cannot fail to make a lasting impression upon them.

When the Prince Maha Vajiravudh was, in January last, proclaimed heir to the throne of Siam, her Majesty the Queen, who is never backward in her kindly interest in foreign Princes resident among us, received the two young Siamese at Windsor Castle.

The King of Siam is one of the most absolute and the most enlightened rulers of the East. Six to seven millions of people owe and render to him a willing allegiance. The Siamese are an intelligent and progressive people. They are friendly to England, and desirous of learning all that is good and wholesome in self-government. This, they believe, we can teach them, and we only hope that the Crown Prince's visit among us may have the desired result, of better fitting him to become the ruler of the great and progressive nation of Siam.



*Photo by C. Vandyk, Gloucester Road.*

THE CROWN PRINCE OF SIAM.