

Appointment of Ninian Thomson as Assistant Professor of History and Political Economy, Presidency College

Accessed: 13/03/2023

I have the honor to state, in reply to your letter No. 19, dated 1st instant, that I am unable to recommend any one of the Officers of the Department included in the list to which His Honor refers as duly qualified to succeed Mr Sanders in the Assistant Professorship of History at the Presidency College.

2. Of the Gentlemen now in the service, who are not already provided with better appointments, Mr. G. Bellett, B. A., of Christ's Church, Oxford, is the only one who can be considered to possess the qualifications requisite for such an Office in the Metropolitan College of Bengal. But this Gentleman's name does not appear in the list which I had the honor to submit to the Lieutenant Governor, as he had not arrived in India at the date of my former communication. Mr. Bellet has come out under a Covenant with the government for employment in the Educational service in the Lower Provinces, and it is understood that another Gentleman is now on his way to India under a similar Covenant.

3. His Honor is aware that upwards of a year ago the Home Government was solicited to select two persons qualified for the higher appointments in this Department, and that so long ago as April last, an intimation was received that the request could be complied with. Nothing more was heard of the matter until the unexpected appearance of Mr Bellet by the Steamer of the 11th January, but in anticipation of the arrival of these Gentlemen the appointment of Second Master of the Dacca Collegiate School, the salary of which is Rupees (300) three hundred, has been kept open for one of them for nearly a year, with great inconvenience to all parties concerned. Mr. Tydd, the Head Master of the same School, whose salary is Rupees (400) four hundred, has now announced his desire to be admitted to pension in April next, which will leave his appointment also vacant Second Mastership and to give him the Head Mastership two months hence on Mr. Tydd's retirement. The second Mastership will then be again vacant, and I promise to keep it as a substantive appointment for the other Gentleman whose arrival from England may now I presume be daily expected, but it will be desirable to send him at once to officiate as Head Master in the Hooghly Collegiate School in the place of Mr Twentyman, who has just obtained sick leave to England for a year, and for whom I find it very difficult to find an efficient substitute. I mention these contemplated arrangements to show the Lieutenant-Governor the way in which I propose to employ the only two gentlemen at the disposal of the Department who are of University standing and who may both be presumed competent to discharge the duties of the Assistant Professorship in the Presidency College.

4. For this appointment I beg strongly to recommend Mr. Ninian H Thomson, M. A., of Balliol College, Oxford, a Graduate in Classical Honors in 1853. His Honor is aware that the Department is now almost destitute of men in the junior ranks who possess a liberal education, whilst it is daily apparent that such men are urgently required for appointments of Rupees (300) three hundred and upwards, where they may receive training for higher and more important posts in the service I am therefore most anxious to secure the services of Mr Thomson, a Gentleman who is regarded by all who know him as likely to be an important acquisition in the department. Mr. Thomson, however, who is, as His Honor knows, a Barrister and has been for some years resident in Calcutta, is unwilling to leave the Presidency for any lower appointments at my disposal, and if he is not retained for the Presidency College, his services will be lost

to the department altogether, and I should then find it almost impossible to fill the other present or expected vacancies at Dacca and Hooghly with men whom I consider competent for the duties of these important posts

5. More Gentlemen of University standing are urgently required in the Department. It is both cheaper and more satisfactory to obtain the services of such persons in this Country when they are to be had, which is very seldom the case; and I am most anxious not to lose the opportunity which now offers of strengthening the Staff of the Department which was probably never more weak than it is at the present moment in Officers qualified to succeed to the higher appointments in which the training and character of an English Gentleman are of such inestimable value.

6. In confirmation of this statement, I take leave to quote the following extract from a private letter I have recently received from Mr. Woodrow:-

“You are quite right in your conclusion that the appointments of Rupees 300 in the Education department are becoming every month more difficult to fill up historically. Two years ago I pressed this subject on Mr Young’s attention. If it is to be done at all it must be done by yourself. Why could you not send to the Master or one of the Tutors of Trinity and ask them to offer the appointment of Second Master of Dacca Collegiate School, or some other definite appointment, to some of the men who have failed in their Fellowship Examination. They would be sure to be first-rate men, and being disappointed in gaining a fellowship they might turn their thoughts to India. In this way you could bring out a man a year from England. The supply would be inadequate, but while the finance commissions are tinkering at the Mofussil Colleges it might be hazardous to have men from England in sufficient numbers to meet the wants of the department.”

7. Mr. Ninian Thomson is on the spot, and as I believe him to be well qualified for the post, I beg again respectfully but strongly to recommend him for the Assistant Professorship of History in the Presidency College,