

## Letter to John Kirk, 2 December 1865

*David Livingstone*

Published by Livingstone Online ([livingstoneonline.org](http://livingstoneonline.org)), 2017

[0001]

MS/17/2 Bombay 2 Dec<sup>r</sup> 1865

60

My Dear Kirk

D<sup>r</sup> Birdwood

the curator of the Botanical garden and Museum here told me yesterday that he would recommend you to the Governor as a fit person to occupy his place - He was at college with you but did not know you otherwise than by sight - As it is likely from what I said to the Governor that you may get an offer I shall try to give you as clear an idea of the affair as possible - The salary is 300 Rupees a month say £50 or £600 a year with a good house which as rents have risen enormously is as much more He is going to ask an advance of pay & believes it will be £R700 a month or £840. This is not so much as it looks like owing to the high price of living now in Bombay - A horse & phaeton with horse boy & servants would cost you in your free house 300 R or £300

a sad end was that of poor Rae - M<sup>r</sup> Brown of the same company now says that they are

[0002]

month, so with your R 500 to 700 you would have £20 & £40 over say £240 or £480 to same yearly the cost of horse & phaeton would be £150 - The house is in the Botanic Garden - and that is new - The Museum is only building - and is rather a fine building at the

entrance to the Garden - you would direct the planting out and select plants - seeds and have men under you to do the work - The situation is flat, and during the monsoon patches of water lie adjacent - Dr Birdwood has been the chief hand in getting up the gardens looks on them with great affection, and hence his anxiety to get a fit occupant while he retires I believe for a time on account of want of wealth & having been ten years out in Bombay - He suffers from fever and his stomach cannot bear quinine or arsenic - He is rather desponding as to his state of health The Governors band plays in the gardens & people flock to hear it - as you are a lady killer you might be successful in the matrimonial line there - Fruit & vegetables you would have free - The medical professor does not stand high

disassociated from the sultan now - the will hire

[0003]

and you would have a fair share in time probably a large one - of the practice - Dr Birdwood devotes his time more to literary pursuits than practice, hence I guess his duties do not occupy a large portion of his time - He is Hon Secretary to the Bombay Asiatic society & something else which bring honour & bother only - My impression is that if nothing better has turned up yet and the offer comes you might accept it as a step in the right direction - If employed the Governor would provide for you elsewhere in the event of Birdwood resuming his duties - He gave his private physician Dr Steadman a good appointment as head of the Sir Jamsetjee Jhejeebhoy hospital - there are many Scotchmen here - and they are clannish but all making

money & eager to go home - The  
climate is not good but with care  
one may enjoy good health - Whether  
you ought to take this when offered  
as a stepping stone to something  
else or decline it as likely to shelve  
you into Indian ways I cant say  
It is an important step in life and  
with more risk than at home - I  
would run the risk for a higher

their labour in open market he does not know  
of Rae's brother coming out - Is Rae's wife his  
heir?

[0004]

stake than usually offers at home  
but you must decide & I trust  
that God will give wisdom  
to act for the best -

It is rather premature in me  
to write so much about what  
His Excellency may or may not  
do - I think it likely He will be  
disposed to make you an offer  
He is a very good man - is accused  
of being too soft - but it is in man[-]  
-ner only - when I hear more  
I shall let you have it This  
goes by a new company started  
by American's "Stearns Hobart &c"  
who send cotton by the overland  
route & charge only £60 ^ passage money from this  
to Liverpool - I am living with  
one of them M<sup>r</sup> Stearns a very  
good fellow - I dont know my  
starting day & hence I write now  
in case of being called off - all  
my men are ready - I am not  
to wait for a man of war but go  
in one of Sherow Osbornes fleet  
called Thule a present of the Sultan  
of Zanzibar - Seward is acting  
there - no appointment has been  
made Affectionably yours  
David Livingstone