

Letter to George L. Conyngham, 5 October 1858

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[0001]

MS 8/5
5-6-9 Zambesi River 5th Oct^r
1858

My Dear M^r Conyngham

We have an opportunity of writing home again sooner than we expected and I have had the most unpleasant letter to write I ever penned. The Naval officer Commander Bedingfeld who came with us got to Loggerheads with the captain of the Pearl and I knowing how we were situated with the vessel of the colonial office had to protect Captain Duncan, and on the first occasion in which I did so by saying "C^m Bedingfeld I must have no more of these public alterations"

Would you be kind enough to send from your stationer a supply of proper official paper & envelopes with the newspapers at your convenience

[0002]

he tendered his resignation - He was evidently of opinion that I could not move mile without him - and tendered his resignation several times. At last I mounted the Paddle box myself and to my no small wonder found out I was a skipper and have been howling out "Ease her, stop her &c ever since - B. - was very much disgusted when he found he could be dispensed with and set about plans to secure his pay - Now I have been obliged to write long accounts to Lord Malmesbury of his conduct and never felt more averse to the pen for it is the first time I have

sat down to write against anyone -
I know it must be distasteful to his
Lordship to read it and to make the affair
worse it was I myself that recommended
him for the appointment. It was only after
I heard him boasting of having been tried
by court martial that I felt I had made a
mistake - I was very careful to ascertain

[0003]

the tempers of my companions but his
eluded my vigilance till it was too late.
In one point I expect abuse and that
is working on Sundays. The Great Niger
Expedition you may remember lost
nearly all the crew & officers. They
kept Sundays and had prayers three
times a day even while in the Mangrove
swamps - but when I came into
similar situations I made all haste
to get out of them. It would have been
more in accordance with my
feelings to have rested but by my plan
I sent the crew of the Pearl off all well
more blame would have been attached
to my name had I lost the men than
will be now but Bedingfeld will
make the most he can of it.

The most important piece of
news I have to tell is we dug the

[0004]

very first coal ever taken from
the earth in this country and
having tried a ton & a half our
engineer pronounces it very good.
With a great abundance of good
coal and no end of the finest iron
ore surely something will be done
for the civilization of Africa
My men were overjoyed in receiving
me back again - Thirty of them
had died of small pox and six
were killed by a rebel chief
but all the rest are ready to return
to their own land with me -

I beg leave to trouble

you again with a packet of
letters and am ever yours
Most truly
David Livingstone