

AUSTRALIAN JOINT COPYING PROJECT

LORD MONTEAGLE

Papers, 1831-57

Reel M976

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Thomas Spring Rice (1790-1866), 1st Baron Monteagle (created 1839), was born in Limerick, Ireland, the son of Stephen Rice of Mount Trenchard and his wife Catherine Spring. He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge, and later studied law at Lincoln's Inn. In 1820 he was elected to the House of Commons, where he was closely associated with the Whigs who were led by Lord Lansdowne. In 1827-28 he was Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the Home Office in the ministry led by George Canning. When the Whigs returned to power in 1830, Spring Rice was appointed Secretary to the Treasury. In 1834-35 he was briefly Secretary of State for the Colonies. He then became Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Melbourne's second ministry. In this position he was widely regarded as a failure. He resigned in 1839, was raised to the peerage, but did not hold public office again.

In 181 Spring Rice married Lady Theodosia Pery, the daughter of the 1st Earl of Limerick, and they had eight children. She died in 1839 and in 1841 he married Mary Anne Marshall, the daughter of a Yorkshire industrialist. Her fortune enabled him to survive the considerable loss of income he incurred during the great Irish famine of the 1840s.

Monteagle devoted a great deal of time and energy to seeking to reduce the suffering of the Irish people in this period. Although no longer in office, he corresponded frequently with Cabinet ministers, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Treasury officials about the condition of the rural population and the need to abandon laissez-faire policies in order to hold together the fabric of society.

Monteagle had taken a strong interest in emigration to the colonies from his time at the Colonial Office. Government support for emigration was growing: T.F. Elliot was created Agent-General for Emigration in 1837 and the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission was created in 1840. In 1838 13 families from Limerick emigrated to Australia on the *Aliquis*, some of whom had worked for the Spring Rice family or their tenants. When assisted emigration was resumed in 1847, Monteagle actively encouraged people from his estates and the surrounding districts to emigrate. 30 left in 1847, 42 in 1848 and 31 in 1849, most of whom eventually settled in the Port Phillip district. The numbers increased after 1850, as emigrants left to join family or friends already in Australia. Lady Monteagle mostly lived in London, but she assiduously collected forms from the Colonial Land and Emigration Commission and corresponded with the steward and housekeeper at Mount Trenchard about loans and other assistance to intending emigrants. Between 1838 and 1858 about 800 'Monteagle emigrants' came to Australia. They were mostly from Mount Trenchard, Shanagolden, Robertstown, Kilcoman and Loghill in north-west County Limerick.

Reference: Christopher O'Mahony and Valerie Thompson. *Poverty to Promise: the Monteagle emigrants 1838-58*, Sydney, Crossing Press, 1994.

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Papers of Thomas Spring Rice, later Lord Monteagle, relating to Irish emigration, and emigration generally, 1831-57. The papers are not in strict chronological order and memoranda, printed documents and miscellaneous papers are scattered among the correspondence. The general correspondence on emigration is mostly in the earlier part of the reel and the correspondence on assistance to migrants from Limerick to Australia is near the end of the reel. The substantial report by Richard Muggerridge on emigration considered as a source of relief to Ireland (1837) is at the end of the reel.

1. Correspondence on emigration, 1831-51

Correspondence of Monteagle relating to emigration from Ireland and England, economic conditions in Ireland, the potato famine, the Irish Colonisation Fund, J.R. Godley's pamphlet *Observations on the Irish poor law* (1847), and government assistance for emigration to Australia and Canada. There are also references to economic conditions in Australia, the need for labourers in Australia, female emigration to Australia, and moves to abolish convict transportation to Van Diemen's Land. Most of the correspondence dates from 1846-48.

The collection contains copies or drafts of many letters written by Monteagle. His correspondents include C.B. Adderley, Lord Bessborough, Sir Richard Bourke, Charles Buller, Caroline Chisholm, Lord Clare, Lord Clarendon, Sir Stephen De Vere, T.F. Elliot, Lord Fitzwilliam, J.R. Godley, Lord Grey, L.A. Jackson, Edward Macarthur, D. McPherson (Sydney), William Smith O'Brien, Sir Robert Peel, Lord John Russell, Stephen Spring-Rice, Sir Charles Trevelyan, W.W. Whitmore and Sir Charles Wood.

2. Memoranda on emigration, 1835-48

T.F. Elliot (Colonial Office). The Department of the Agent-General for Emigration, 29 Jan. 1835. (14pp)

Richard M. Muggerridge (Poor Law Commission). Emigration considered as a source of relief to Ireland in connection with the proposed Poor Law Act for that country, 1837. (64pp) The document includes sections on the duties of emigration commissioners, emigration agents at the ports and colonial emigration agents, the Board of Guardians and union officers in Ireland, and various forms and circulars.

Lord Monteagle. Memorandum on emigration, sent to Lord Clarendon, 21 Oct. 1848. (30pp)

Remarks on the memorial respecting colonisation presented to Lord John Russell, unsigned and undated. (23pp)

3. Irish immigrants in Australia, 1848-57

Correspondence and financial papers concerning individuals and families who emigrated from County Limerick to Victoria and other Australian colonies. Some of the letters were addressed to Lord Monteagle, many to Lady Monteagle, and some jointly to Lord and Lady Monteagle. A few were addressed to relatives in Ireland and were evidently passed on to the Monteagles. The letters usually deal with financial matters, such as the repayment of deposits and the remittance of money to assist other family members or friends to come out to Australia. Some letters contain requests for specific articles and others describe conditions in the colonies and news of other Irish emigrants.

Most of the correspondents were residing in Melbourne. They include John Culhane, John Danaher, Patrick Danaher, Michael Gibson, Patrick Healy, Ann Kelly, Patrick Kelly, Ellen Kenny, Mary McGrath, Michael McNamara, Catherine Martin, Michael Martin, Bridget Mulvihill, Mary O'Shaughnessy and James Walsh. There are also letters from Jon Buckley (Port Gawler, South Australia), Thomas Quilty (Tumut) and Ellen Sullivan (Geelong).

In addition to the letters from emigrants, there are letters from Patrick Connor, the steward at Mount Trenchard, and Stephen Walcott of the Colonial Land and Emigration Office. There are also letters from people in Ireland concerning relatives who had emigrated to Australia. Finally, there are a number of emigrant applications and blank application forms and receipts for payments made by Lady Monteagle on behalf of emigrants.

4. Miscellaneous papers

Extracts from the minutes of the Royal Agricultural Improvement Society of Ireland, 1845-46.

Ireland: systematic colonisation, Morning Chronicle, 7 April 1847.

Abstract of emigration returns from Ireland, 1847-51.

Number of emigrants (English, Scottish, Irish) to Australia in 1848.

Letter from an Irish emigrant [P. Danaher] to Lord Monteagle, 20 March 1848

Emigration 1848: a table showing emigrant voyages to Sydney, Port Phillip, Adelaide and the Cape of Good Hope in 1848, including the tonnage of the vessels, contract price, date of departure, the number of married couples, single men, single women and children, and the number of English, Scottish and Irish emigrants.

Lord Lyttelton. *Emigrants' Spiritual Aid Fund*, 30 April 1849. (3pp)

Voluntary information of people of New South Wales collected by Mrs Chisholm, n.d. (4pp)

Memorial to Lord Lieutenant from magistrates of the County of Limerick on poor relief, n.d.

Notes on financial assistance sent to Ireland by relatives in Victoria, n.d.

A proposal to erect shelters for emigrants at Melbourne and elsewhere, Oct. 1853. (3pp)