William Monsell: An Irish Catholic Unionist

MATTHEW POTTER
49 Meadowvale, Rakeen, Limerick

The political ideology and sense of identity of William Monsell, First Baron Emly of Tervoe, Liberal MP for Limerick from 1847 to 1874 are analysed. His eventual staunch Unionism was combined with a strong sense of being Irish. Basic biographical details and an insight into his personal and spiritual life are also offered.

William Monsell, First Lord Emly, is a major figure in the history of County Limerick. Indeed, he is a significant figure in the history of Ireland, although his prominence has only recently begun to be acknowledged.¹ He was born in 1812 into a wealthy Protestant landed family, whose principal residence was Tervoe House, near the village of Clarina, about five miles from Limerick city. He was reared in an atmosphere of devotion to the Union with Britain, loyalty to the Church of Ireland, and adherence to the Tory Party. He was educated in England, at the public school of Winchester, from 1826 to 1830, and at Oriel College Oxford, from 1831 to 1833. In 1836, he inherited the family estates from his grandfather. Monsell was a serious conscientious and just man. In 1850 he converted to the Roman Catholic Church under the influence of his great friend and mentor, John Henry Cardinal Newman (1801-90). This process of conversion occurred over a long period in the late 1840s, and coincided with a change in his political allegiance from Tory to Whig.

In the 1840s Monsell had flirted with Federalism and even Repeal but from the early 1850s onwards his religious and political views remained fairly fixed for the rest of his life. He was always to be a staunch Unionist thereafter and broke with the Liberals over Home Rule in 1886. However, he was to give long and valuable service to the Liberal cause for many years. He sat as Liberal MP for County Limerick from 1847 to 1874. During this period, he became one of Ireland’s leading political figures. He served in several British administrations, under four Prime Ministers, between 1853 and 1873. He was Clerk of the Ordnance (1853-57), President of the Board of Health (1857), Paymaster-General and Vice President of the Board of Trade (1866), Under Secretary for the Colonies (1868-71) and Postmaster General (1871-73). He was a close friend of such giant figures as Newman, Manning, Cullen and Gladstone. In 1874 he was raised to the peerage with the title Baron Emly of Tervoe. He died in 1894 after enjoying a political career of nearly sixty years duration.

Monsell always considered himself Irish. On 1 March 1870, while addressing the House of Commons, he described himself as ‘an Irishman’.² His public utterances throughout the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s are filled with references asserting that Ireland was a separate nation from England or Scotland. On 26 July 1867, he told the Commons that the Irish and the English were ‘two distinct

¹ The chief accounts of Monsell’s life are to be found in Matthew Potter, A Catholic Unionist: The Life and Times of William Monsell, 1st Baron Emly of Tervoe (1812-94), Limerick 1994; Dermot Roantrre, William Monsell M.P. and the Catholic Question in Victorian Britain and Ireland, Ph.D Thesis, University College Dublin 1990.
² Hansard’s Parliamentary Debater. Third Series. CXCI X 1023 (March 1, 1870).
A very full exposition of his theory of Ireland and Irish nationality is to found in his address to the annual meeting of the Statistical and Social Enquiry Society of Ireland on 22 January 1869. The entire speech is permeated with the idea that Ireland is a separate country, a concept that is taken by him to be axiomatic. He speaks of Ireland as ‘a country’, refers to ‘our population’ and ‘the natural character of our people’, and uses the term ‘we’ and ‘home’ to refer to the Irish and Ireland respectively. He compares and contrasts Irish statistics with those of other constituent countries of the United Kingdom, such as Scotland, as well as data drawn from independent countries, like Belgium. Indeed he trenchantly defends the national character throughout this address. He boasts of Ireland’s lower rates of industrial unrest and of crime (especially murder) when compared to the rest of the United Kingdom. He acknowledges Ireland’s backwardness but does not blame it on inherent racial or religious inferiority: ‘those shortcomings of which we are sometimes accused are due neither to the national character of the people, nor the qualities of the soil, nor the dispensations of providence, but to the impoverishing and debasing political system with which we were cursed’. The Penal Laws ‘found us reduced to barbaric industrial ineptitude, produced by political causes, and not by the natural character of our people’. Thus, given favourable political and economic circumstances, the Irish are capable of advances as great as those of any other civilised nation.

Jennifer Ridden has argued that the Irish Liberal gentry claimed Irish nationality in three ways: they resided in Ireland and so shared a sense of place with other inhabitants of Ireland; they were resident landlords, committed to Ireland as an entity; their families had lived in the country for hundreds of years. These factors were all present in Monsell’s case, and help account for his firm sense of Irishness. There were two other aspects to Monsell’s view of the nation which were crucial to his political philosophy. Firstly, he stressed the unity of the Irish nation, so as to emphasise the elite’s authentic place within it. ‘The three great classes - landlords, farmers and labourers - are bound together by links almost too minute to be discerned, but which yet no human power can sever’, he stated in his address of 22 January 1869. Secondly, he defined his Irish nationality ‘in cultural and territorial terms but in rejecting political nationalist aspirations’. In 1847, Lord Adare had distinguished Monsell as a ‘Nationalist’ but not as a Repealer. This distinction brings us to the second strand of Monsell’s core beliefs, his Unionism.

The best summary of his sense of nationhood is to be found in a remark of his close friend, David Moriarty, Bishop of Kerry. In 1868 the Bishop told Gladstone that ‘there does not breathe a purer patriot than Monsell, and what is rare in Irish patriotism, he is heart and soul attached to (the) British connexion’. Linda Colley has described the development of the concept of a dual nationality between the years 1707 and 1837, when a British nation was constructed from the four component countries of the United Kingdom. She describes the half-century between 1776 and 1815 as ‘one of the most formative periods in the making of the modern world and - not accidentally - in the forging of

3 Hansard, CLXXXIX 222 (26 July 1867)
4 Address of the Right Hon. William Monsell M.P. Vice-President, at the Annual meeting of the Statistical and Social Enquiry Society of Ireland, 22 January, 1869.
5 Ibid.
7 Statistical and Social Enquiry Society Address
8 Ridden, Making Good Citizens, p. 218. This was true of Monsell’s circle in general. Aubrey De Vere and the 3rd Earl of Dunraven were also cultural nationalists, indeed major figures in the Celtic Revival, while remaining political Unionists.
9 Adare to Monsell 22 May, 1847 Monsell Papers. National Library of Ireland. Ms. 8318 (10). Lord Adare (1812-71) was Monsell’s brother-in-law, and in 1850 became the third Earl of Dunraven.
Plate 1  William Monsell, 1st Lord Emly 1812-94.
British identity. There emerged a new unitary ruling class in place of those separate and specific landed establishments that had existed in the four countries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However the Scottish, Welsh and Anglo-Irish nobilities did not become absorbed into the English elite. Instead they became British in a new and intensely profitable fashion, while remaining in their own minds and behaviour, Welsh or Scottish or Irish as well. She cites the example of the 4th Earl of Aberdeen (under whom Monsell served in the 1850s), who saw 'no conflict at all between working as a British politician in London and being assertively Scottish. Similarly, Jennifer Ridden writes of the Irish Liberals' insistence on both Irish and British nationality and of their belief that 'membership of the British nation offered them an identity which was not the same as English identity and which did not require any disavowal of Irish identity. Monsell subscribed to this dual nationality. On 2 January 1881, he wrote to Gavan Duffy 'I think the entire union of hearts between the three kingdoms may be arrived at without the sacrifice of one grain of our national feeling'. Any attempt to deny the authenticity of this claim infuriated him. In 1893 he angrily attacked Gladstone and his supporters for their 'monstrous' accusation that 'because we are Unionists, of not loving our country'. Warming to the theme he continued: 'I confess I have a strong feeling on this subject - an intense feeling - I feel bitterly the accusation. I declare before God that from the time I first entered Parliament some fifty years ago my earnest desire was ... to raise up my fellow countrymen that were then downtrodden and give them every advantage and every privilege that the citizens of the rest of the United Kingdom enjoy'. In short, Monsell was a Unionist because he was an Irish patriot not despite it.

His dual nationality owed a great deal to his English education. While his predecessors at Tervoe had been educated in Ireland, he was a Wykehamite and Oxonian. This affected him in two important ways. Firstly, it taught him the English culture and way of life, and even 'how to speak the English language in a distinctive and characteristic way'. Secondly the emphasis on the classics in the public school system instilled in its pupils a strong British patriotism. In later life Monsell was also touched by two further processes that strengthened the solidarity of the British elites. In the first place the growing intermarriage between members of the English elite and those of the other three member countries of the United Kingdom resulted in a very large increase in the numbers of landed families with multiple residences and estates throughout the British Isles. The 2nd Earl of Dunraven had married Caroline Wyndham, an heiress with estates and houses in both England and Wales. The Earl's son, Lord Adare, was William's confidante, and his daughter Anna Maria (1814-55) married Monsell in 1836. His cousins, the Perys, Earls of Limerick, and his friend Augustus Stafford O'Brien were also proprietors in both Britain and Ireland. Secondly, the Act of Union had transferred parliamentary affairs to Westminster, making it necessary for an active Irish politician to base himself for much of the year in London.

The negative aspects of Monsell's Unionism became more apparent as the threats to the Union grew more formidable. He strongly believed that Ireland could only suffer if she left the United Kingdom. He opposed Fenianism in the 1860s and Home Rule in the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s with equal firmness. In 1873 he was furious at the rejection of Gladstone's University Bill and he told Newman: 'you cannot

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12 Ibid., p. 7.
13 Ibid., p. 167.
14 Ibid., p. 163.
16 Enly to Duffy 2nd January (1881) National Library of Ireland, Gavan Duffy Papers Ms. 9005/23
17 'A Roman Catholic Liberal Peer on the Irish Home Rule Bill', Speech by Lord Enly Irish Unionist Alliance Publications, vol. 3 no. 95, Dublin 1894.
18 As we have already noted, Monsell attended Winchester Public School from 1826 to 1830 and Oriel College, Oxford from 1831 to 1833
19 Colley, Britons, p. 167.
20 Ibid., pp 155-70.
speak out the truth, that Ireland is unfit to govern itself'.\textsuperscript{21} In 1885 he told the House of Lords that ‘we are still, thank God, a United Kingdom’.\textsuperscript{22} It was one thing to flirt with federalism in the 1840s, when even O’Connell and Young Ireland wooed the landlords, and the danger of social revolution, until 1848 at least, seemed remote. It was an entirely different matter when the Fenians and Home Rule represented a far more insidious threat. The Fenians were aggregated to the secret societies of Europe and their object was to establish a democratic republic. They were the enemies of the priests as well as landlords,’ he told the Commons.\textsuperscript{23} The horrors of the Paris Commune, bringing revolution and destruction to the capital of his beloved France, showed Monsell where such tendencies ultimately led. Later, the Horne Rule and land agitations seemed to be a continuation of this revolutionary threat. On 2 August 1880, he described the land agitation, in a speech in the Lords, as ‘socialistic’ and ‘a wicked agitation’.\textsuperscript{24} In 1893, he spoke of the dangers that would occur when the ‘law of the Queen was superseded by the law of the Land League’ and how the establishment of Home Rule would lead to these ‘gentlemen’ forming ‘the first cabinet who would have the control of the lives and liberties of her Majesty’s loyal subjects’.\textsuperscript{25} The Southern Unionists represented ‘the great mass of property, intelligence, culture and industry in the three Southern provinces’ and could not be abandoned to socialism and anarchy.\textsuperscript{26} Home Rule would not merely be a restoration of the old Irish Parliament at College Green but would result in the demise of the Ascendancy and the prevailing social system. It would inevitably lead to disorder and social revolution. He felt that the only guarantee of stability and the rule of law was the preservation of the Union.

It may puzzle the modern observer how Monsell could be a life-long Liberal, and yet break with the Liberal Party in 1886, thus aligning himself with the Tories whom he had abhorred for so long. In fact Monsell’s Liberalism and Unionism were closely intertwined. The role of the Irish elite was to negotiate on behalf of their fellow citizens with the British State.\textsuperscript{27} This was the theme of Monsell’s major policy statements to the Commons following the Fenian rebellion. He was bringing Ireland’s legitimate grievances before the bar of Parliament and warning that failure to deal with them would fatally undermine the Union and the position of the Irish elite in particular.

However Monsell did not allow these heady considerations to distract him from local affairs. A politician of the nineteenth century, like his modern counterpart, had to possess a strong local base. Monsell never forgot this and carefully cultivated his constituency. His correspondence is full of references to patronage, a very significant part of his electoral strength. He was not above pork barrel politics either. During his term as Postmaster General (1871-3) he ordered the building of a new general post office in Limerick city.\textsuperscript{28} He ‘accelerated the local post, saw to it that the English mail reached Limerick between twelve and one o’clock instead of in the evening, and extended the telegraph throughout Ireland’.\textsuperscript{29} Also ‘it was whilst he held office as Postmaster General that he succeeded in getting us the first ‘fast train’ we enjoyed between this (i.e. Limerick) and Dublin and which for long years afterwards was known as Mr. Monsell’s train.’\textsuperscript{30} As a popular and resident landlord he was assured

\textsuperscript{21} Newman Papers (NP/M/6) Monsell to Newman 3 March 1873.
\textsuperscript{22} Hansard CCXCVIII. 1368 (June 8, 1885)
\textsuperscript{23} Hansard CXC 1659 (March 16, 1868)
\textsuperscript{24} Hansard CCLIV. 1867. 2 August 1880. He described the ‘anti-landlord agitation’ as a ‘terrible evil’
\textsuperscript{25} 1883 speech A Roman Catholic Liberal Peer on the Irish Home Rule Bill.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Redden, Making Good Citizens, pp 123-17, 220-5. For Monsell’s policy statements to the Commons see Hansard CLXXXIX 219-26 (July 26 1887) and CXC 1685-98 (March 16 1868).
\textsuperscript{28} Peter, A Catholic Unionist, p 102.
\textsuperscript{30} Munster News 21 April 1894.
of a considerable personal following. In an age of open voting prior to 1872, the esteem of the Catholic clergy and of neighbouring landlords was of vital importance. Lord Dunraven's tenants were always turned out in large numbers to vote for his friend and brother-in-law Monsell.31

Monsell was also active on the local political scene. He was a member of the Board of Superintendence of Limerick County Jail and of the Committee of Limerick County Hospital. He was one of the governors of the District Lunatic Asylum. He sat on the Board of Guardians of the Limerick Poor Law Union and served as chairman from 1857 to 1882. He was frequently a member of the Limerick Grand Jury. The Poor Law Union and the Grand Jury were the most significant local authorities of the time. He was appointed a Magistrate for county Limerick in 1840 and for County Clare in 1847 (both were appointments for life). He was High Sheriff of County Limerick in 1835 and a Deputy Lieutenant from 1848 to 1871. He was, in addition, Colonel of the County Limerick Militia and Lord Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the city and county.32

Let us turn our attention at this point to Monsell's attitude to Ireland's social problems. In the 1840s he agreed with the prevailing economic wisdom (and the subsequent verdict of history) that the country's gravest difficulty lay in its huge poverty-stricken population. His solution was to promote emigration to the British colonies - this would have the twin desirable effects of clearing Ireland of its excess people while providing Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa with the labour force that they needed so badly. Ireland's difficulty was the Empire's opportunity. When the surplus millions were thus removed, it would be possible to consolidate the many small holdings in the country into economically viable farms. At the same time, a major investment would need to be made in Irish agriculture.33 He saw the Encumbered Estates legislation as providing the means by which this would be brought about. Like other commentators at the time he entertained unrealistically high hopes of the benefits that these measures would confer on Irish agriculture.34 He was also a strong advocate of agricultural education, which would teach Irish farmers the skills and knowledge required to achieve greater productivity and efficiency. He patronised agricultural education in the National School attached to his property at Tervoe.35

In 1844 Monsell told the Devon Commission, then investigating the Irish landlord-tenant relations, that a land agent's duties 'upon a well managed estate consist in looking after the condition and welfare of tenants'.36 He was always a benevolent, and improving landlord, who resided among his tenants.37 He firmly believed that there should be a partnership between landlord and tenants although the latter would naturally have a subordinate role. He practised the three Fs (fair rent, fixity of tenure and free sale) which were the standard demand of tenants' groups, until the 1880s saw the demand for peasant proprietorship come to the fore. With regard to the first F, he did not increase his rents at all between the 1830s and the 1880s38. His tenants enjoyed fixity of tenure, as he evicted no one during his entire fifty eight years as owner of the Monsell estates.39 Finally, he allowed his tenants to sell their farms.

32 See Thomas Directory, 1840 to 1883 inclusive.
33 PP 1847 Report of the Select Committee on Colonisation from Ireland together with Minutes of Evidence pp 197-216 and 231. Also, see Hansard, CXL. 145-8 (2 March, 1849), CIV, 573-7 (20 April, 1849); see also R.D.C. Black, Economic Thought and the Irish Question, Cambridge 1960.
34 Hansard, CLX. 420 (25 July 1859).
35 PP 1845 (20). Evidence taken before the commissioners appointed to inquire into the occupation of land in Ireland. (Devon Commission). 26 August 1844. p. 739.
38 Munster News, 21 April 1894.
subject to his own approval. He tended to give his tenants thirty-one year leases rather than the more common one year tenancy agreements.\textsuperscript{40} During times of distress, he forgave arrears of rent, and took it upon himself to repay Board of Works loans for improvements taken out by his tenants.\textsuperscript{41}

Monsell preached enlightened landlordism as well as practising it. He wanted the government to promote the three Fs by encouraging landlords to grant long leases, and by legislating for tenant right (which usually meant compensating tenants for improvements carried out on their farms when they departed from same).\textsuperscript{42} However, he did not believe in the abolition of the landlord system. He was part of it himself and had a vested interest in its continuation. He was horrified at the Land League campaign in the 1880s and 1890s, which demanded the division of the landlords’ estates among their tenants. He regarded this as an attack on the sanctity of private property, even as Communism.\textsuperscript{43} However he was not opposed to peasant proprietorship in principle, especially in the event of a sale of an estate. He wanted to see some estates bought and then sold to the tenants, so as to give more people a stake in the status quo. However he did not see this as leading to the complete disappearance of the landlord system.\textsuperscript{44} Nevertheless he was a harsh critic of tyrannical landlords and in 1861 fiercely condemned the notorious Glenveagh evictions in county Donegal.\textsuperscript{45} He believed that it was the misconduct of a minority of abusive landlords that had created the necessity for Gladstone’s Land Acts of 1870 and 1881.

Alexander Somerville (1811-85), a Scottish writer on social reform, who had spent time in Ireland at the time of the Great Famine, alleged that Monsell was a bad landlord. He claimed that Monsell had cleared many tenants from his estates, who now lived as paupers in Limerick City.\textsuperscript{46} Somerville was a respected witness whose comments cannot be lightly dismissed. However his information was ‘on the authority of a Poor-Law commissioner’ who is not named.\textsuperscript{47} The contrary evidence is overwhelming. The unanimous testimony of Monsell’s contemporaries, including nationalists’ and tenants’ representatives, was that he was a kindly and benevolent landlord. Folk memory in Cratloe, Co. Clare, records that during the Famine he ‘gave seven pounds to each householder who left (in 1852 and for years after). If they remained, he did not press them in any way or leave a process at any man’s door. Neither did he ask a vote from any of his tenants in O’Connell’s time’.\textsuperscript{48} On 26 October 1880, William Bolster, a tenant of Monsell who was also an active member of the Land League, testified that ‘Mr. Monsell was always in favour of the tenant’.\textsuperscript{49} The folk memory in Clarina, near his former residence, still remembers him as a ‘good landlord’ and he is an honoured figure in the area to the present time.

Monsell the public man is well documented, the private man less so. His chief trait was his strong devotion to the Catholic Church, which dominated his entire life.\textsuperscript{50} He attended Mass daily and had a private chapel in Tervoe House, where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, by special permission of the Pope. (This rare honour had also been conferred on Daniel O’Connell.) When in London he

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\textsuperscript{40} Bessborough Commission, Minutes of Evidence, pp 676-7.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Hansard, CLXXVI, 72-74 (June 21, 1864), CLXXVII, 707 (February 24 1865), CLXXVIII, 617-18 (March 31 1865), CCLIV, 1867 (August 2 1880).
\textsuperscript{43} Hansard, CCLI, 416-17, (March 5 1880).
\textsuperscript{44} Hansard, CXC, 1693, (16th March 1868).
\textsuperscript{45} Hansard, CLXII, 849-50, (19th April 1861).
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., p. 83.
\textsuperscript{49} FP 1881, (18), Bessborough Commission, Minutes of Evidence, 26 October 1880.
\textsuperscript{50} Monster News, 21 April 1894.
assisted at Mass each morning in the fashionable Jesuit Church on Farm Street in Mayfair. He belonged to several religious sodalities including the Third Order of St. Francis. His zeal manifested itself in his many charitable acts. In Clarina, he granted a house to the local catholic curate and he took a close interest in the local National Schools, which he had built, and of which he was manager. His influence on the religious life of Limerick City was enormous. He was a close friend of three successive bishops of Limerick: John Ryan (1828-64), George Butler (1864-86) and Edward Thomas O’Dwyer (1886-1917). The first two were Catholic Whigs (although Butler was later to declare for Home Rule, albeit reluctantly) while O’Dwyer, though he always declared himself a Home Ruler, was widely perceived to have much sympathy with the Ascendancy. Bishop Moriarty of Kerry, a convinced Unionist, was also a close friend. In 1849 Monsell was instrumental in bringing the Good Shepherd nuns to Limerick. In 1853 he collaborated with Bishop Ryan to introduce the Redemptorists. Monsell can, therefore, be regarded as partly responsible for Limerick’s later reputation as ‘the Confraternity City’. In 1861 he facilitated the Sisters of Mercy in taking control of the Limerick Workhouse (now St. Camillus Hospital). In 1856 he donated a magnificent white marble statue of the Virgin Mary by the Italian sculptor Giovanni Benzoni to St. John’s cathedral, then under construction. Pope Pius IX instituted indulgences for all those who should recite prayers in front of this statue. He also paid for the huge statue of St. John the Baptist (to whom the Cathedral is dedicated) which stands on the facade above the main entrance.

This ostentatious holiness was combined with a strict sense of morality and code of personal conduct. He resembled Gladstone, O’Connell and many other contemporaries in his combination of scrupulous piety and political expediency (not unsurprisingly they were often accused of being hypocrites). Jonathan Parry has written that ‘Victorian politicians were as ambitious, cunning, vain, self-deluding and inconstant as the general run of performers on the public stage have been but none of this debared them from having religious preconceptions’. Monsell illustrated this tendency to perfection when he used the oath that he was required to take when sworn in as a member of the Privy Council in 1855 as a political issue. He genuinely abhorred this anti-Catholic oath, but was able to make a political issue out of it at the same time.

Monsell emerges from contemporary sources as a rather solemn and stern figure, with his cultured English accent, tall imposing frame and formal clothes (he always dressed in the garb of a London gentleman, even when at Tervoe). However this typical Victorian gentleman was a very warm family man. When his beloved wife Anna Maria died at the seaside resort of St. Leonards, in Sussex, on 7 January 1855, he was devastated. He was then forty two years old, a widower with no heir. In his grief he erected a Victorian Gothic memorial cross to his wife at Tervoe, the little village which the Monsells had built on their estate. In a typical example of the philanthropy of the times he arranged that each year, on the anniversary of Lady Anna Maria’s death, alms to the value of £1 each were to be given to twenty poor widows. A rumour began to circulate that he was about to enter the religious life. Newman wrote that ‘a Limerick priest told me the other day that it is believed in Limerick and the Ordnance that Monsell is to enter the ecclesiastical state and that those Oratorians at Birm have done it’. I said I had lately been to Birmingham, and had heard nothing of it’.56

51 Ibid.
54 John Fleming, St. John’s Cathedral, Dublin 1987, p. 57.
Newman was right to doubt this tale for Monsell was soon to embark on a second marriage. During one of his frequent visits to France he was introduced to a young French noblewoman, Marie Louise Ernestine Berthe de Montigny (1835-90). The large age gap between them, Monsell was forty-four and Berthe was twenty-two, did not seem to bother either of the parties and they were married on 23 February 1857. Monsell's second marriage was as happy as his first had been. On 5 March 1858, she presented her husband with the long awaited son and heir, Thomas William Gaston, later the 2nd Lord Emly. A daughter, Mary Olivia, quickly followed in 1859. Berthe brought renewed joy into her husband's life. She was as pious as he was and erected at Tervoe the first Lourdes grotto ever built in Ireland. The apparitions at Lourdes had occurred in 1858. She also strengthened and deepened his attachment to France. When her father died in 1866 his inheritance was shared between his three daughters. In this way, Monsell came into an estate near the town of Montoire, in the Loire Valley, which had been the playground of the kings and nobles of France for centuries. The estate contained the Château de Drouilly which remained in the ownership of the Monsell family until the middle of the twentieth century. It was to be Monsell's second home for the rest of his life.

No account of Monsell the man would be complete without a brief consideration of his hobbies. He read a great deal and was reputed to have 'the widest and most profound knowledge of Catholic literature, and even of Catholic theology of any laymen in the United Kingdom'. He could quote extensively and effortlessly from the voluminous works of Newman. Other favourite authors included Shakespeare, Scott, Byron, Dante, Vergil and Horace. His other favourite pastimes included the typical gentry habits: he hunted and shot, played whist and was a capital yachtsman. He often sailed along the Shannon to visit his friends, the De Veres and the O'Briens. He was a member of the Limerick County Club and served on its governing body and committee.

What is most remarkable about Monsell is his wide range of activities and interests. He was a politician, government minister, landlord and intellectual. He was at once a patriotic Irishman, a British gentleman, an adopted Frenchman and a cosmopolitan European.

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57 Potter. *A Catholic Unionist*, p. 45. For Monsell's second marriage, see Hanley 'The Past Glories of Tervoe'.
58 *Munster News*, 21 April 1894.