

Emigration from Ireland to the United States and Canada had been steadily increasing in the years before the Famine as cheap passages became available on the outward voyages of ships which carried timber from the New World. Emigration to Australia did not take place on as wide a scale as that to North America, but during the years of the Famine, some landlords assisted their tenants to go there. In addition, the government organised the settlement in Australia of orphaned children from Irish workhouses. Although the voyage to Australia was longer, and considerably more expensive, than that to North America, emigration there was better organised and, compared with conditions on board the infamous "coffin ships" which sailed across the Atlantic, conditions on board were reasonably good.

In 1844, approximately 68,000 people emigrated from Ireland, mainly to North America. The number of people who left in 1846 rose to 116,000 and in 1847 nearly a quarter of a million people emigrated. This level was sustained until well into the next decade and, altogether, approximately two million people emigrated from Ireland between 1845 and 1855.

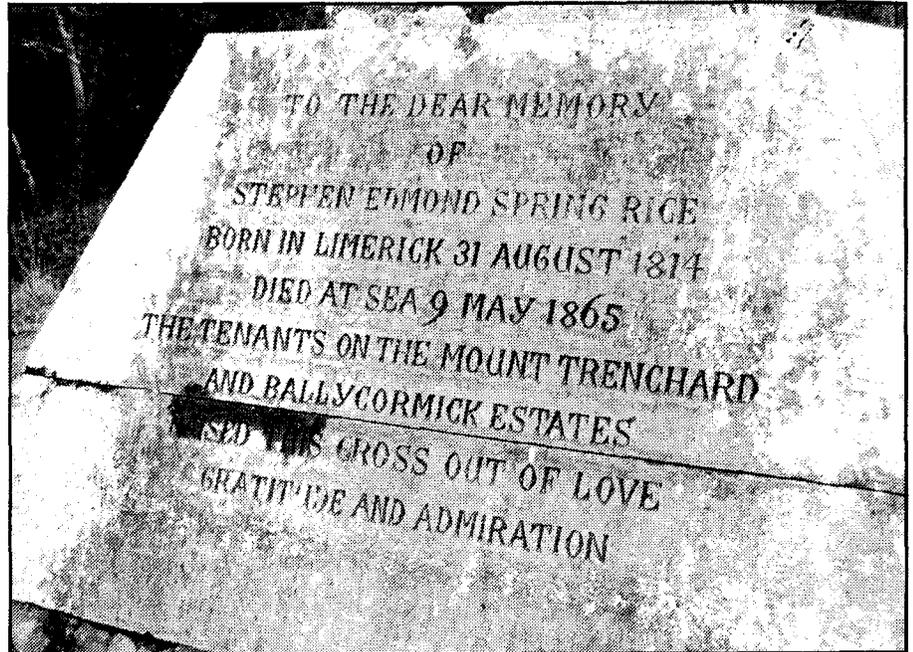
The letter reproduced below was sent to Lord Monteagle, one of the more enlightened Irish landlords, by a tenant whose passage to Australia he had paid. It tells how he and other tenants who had emigrated were faring in their new home. Lord Monteagle was a liberal peer who was Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1835 to 1839. As well as helping tenants from his own estate at Shanagolden to emigrate, he campaigned vigorously in favour of government - assisted emigration to the colonies as a remedy for Ireland's problems of poverty and overpopulation. This letter was printed in circular form as part of the effort to encourage emigration.

Melbourne, Port Philip,
20th of March, 1848.

My Lord,

I, as in duty bound, feel called upon to inform your Lordship how the Emigrants who obtained a passage through your lordship's intercession are situated. All the Girls are employed in the Town of Melbourne, at the rate of Twenty-five to Twenty-six pounds per annum; they are all in respectable places. Thos. Sheahan is employed in the Town adjoining, attending Bricklayers at Four Shillings and Six pence per day-John Enraght on Public work, at the same rate. The general hire for Labourers of every description, my lord, is from Twenty-eight to Thirty-two pounds per annum, with board and lodgings. There is nothing in such demand in this Colony as Male and Female Servants: I was employed myself, my lord, on board the Lady Peel, by the Colonial Doctor, filling up forms of agreement between Masters and Servants, so that I had an opport-

A LETTER TO LORD MONTEAGLE



Memorial to Edmond Spring Rice, at Foynes, Co. Limerick.

unity of knowing all the particulars concerning wages, term of employment, occupation, &c. &c.

I would mention all, but I consider your lordship will feel satisfied when you know they are all in good situations, and with respectable masters and mistresses. I have seen a good deal of the Emigrants whom I knew at home, that obtained a passage through your lordship's intercession, about eleven years ago, some of them live in the Town of Melbourne, and are living comfortably. Ellen Shanahan (Loughill), is married to one Rockford, in this Town, and keeps a Hotel. Maurice Connors, of Foynes, is living in this Town, and has as much money spared as exempts him from personal labour. I have heard from some more of them who live in the Country, and as far as I can learn, my lord, they are living independently. Ellen Sheahan is just going up to her brother accompanied by her first cousin, Daniel Mulcare, of Clounlikard, himself and his brother has lived some time in this Town, and kept a Grocer's Shop. They have acted the part of a brother to me, my lord, they gave me the best of entertainment, and procured a situation for me with one Mr. Ham, a Surveyor. I am going up the Country to the Avoca River to survey a Station; my wages are Twenty-one pounds for six months. Mr. Hurley has sent for his nephew and his aunt, they are on their way up by this time. I except, my lord, to be able to remit

some money to your lordship in recompense for the expenses incurred on my and my sisters' account by your lordship, as well as some relief to my poor mother, brothers and sister. I hope, my lord, this humble but imperfect epistle will find your Lordship, Lady Monteagle, Mr. Spring Rice, and all his family in good health. Any information I can give your lordship respecting the interior of this Country, will not be lost sight of on my part. Mr. Thos. Ham, of Great Collins Street, Melbourne, would forward any commands to me, my lord, if your lordship should want any more information concerning any of the late or former Emigrants. Everything in this Colony, my lord, is from three to four times as dear here as it is in England or Ireland, except Bread, Beef, Mutton, &c., the best of which is obtained at Three half-pence to Two-pence per lb.

I am, My Lord, with profound veneration,

Your Lordship's most devoted Servant,

P. Danaher,

P.S. My Sisters also, my lord, beg leave to return their most sincere thanks to your Lordship and Lady Monteagle.

John Flanagan and Wife are both employed by a man of the name of Murphy, a Brewer, about twelve miles out in the Country, wages Fifty pounds per annum.

(National Library of Ireland, Monteagle Correspondence MS 13400 (2))