

13th Earl of Derby Papers
1846-1851
Mss.B.D44

American Philosophical Society
9/2000
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Summary Information

Repository	American Philosophical Society
Creator	Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th Earl of, 1775-1851
Title	13th Earl of Derby Papers
Date [inclusive]	1846-1851
Call number	Mss.B.D44
Extent	0.25 Linear feet
Extent	18 items, 0.25 linear feet
Location	LH-MV-C-4
Language	English
Abstract	<p>Edward Smith Stanley (1775-1851), the 13th Earl of Derby, was an avid naturalist and keeper of one of the great menageries in early Victorian England. The collection consists of fourteen letters and two partial letters written by Derby to Thomas Reade (1785-1849) and his son Richard. From 1846 to 1851, the Reades, British consuls at Tripoli, were an important part of a network of associates that helped secure exotic animals for Derby's private menagerie at Knowsley Park. There is one letter each of Richard Reade to Derby and one from Derby to his "agent," Louis Fraser.</p>
Preferred Citation	Cite as: 13th Earl of Derby Papers, American Philosophical Society.

Background note

The eldest son of the 12th Earl of Derby, Edward Smith Stanley (1775-1851) was born at Knowsley, the family seat, eight miles east of Liverpool. After receiving his MA at Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1795, Stanley entered Parliament, representing Preston, Lancashire, a spot traditionally held by members of his family. He was, however, not a zealous politician, never attaining prominence in the Whig Party, seldom speaking in the House, and stepping down from his seat altogether in 1812. Upon the death of his father in October 1834, Stanley succeeded to the title of 13th Earl of Derby and was made a Knight of the Garter in April 1839.

Although politics may never have absorbed Derby's interests, zoology did. At Knowsley, he established a magnificent private menagerie, tapping his fortune and his social and political contacts, to scour Britain's African colonies for exotic specimens. Eventually, he sought to establish breeding populations at Knowsley, or failing that, to collect at least the skins and bones. He was a discerning collector, widely read in the zoological literature, and sought out the most obscure species available, with a particular eye for antelopes, ruminants and birds. With over 100 acres of land and 70 acres of water, his menagerie supported nearly 100 species of mammals and over 300 species of birds at the time of his death and consumed between £10,000 and £15,000 per year for upkeep. His zoological museum was equally extensive, boasting over 20,000 specimens of mammals, birds, eggs, and lower vertebrates.

Derby was a regular contributor to the *Proceedings* of the Zoological Society, of which he was President at the time of his death, and between 1828 and 1833 he was President of the Linnæan Society. He may best be remembered, however, as the employer of Edward Lear (1812-1888), who was hired by Derby between 1832 and 1837 to draw the animals at the Knowsley menagerie. Lear's *Book of Nonsense* was drawn for Derby's grandchildren.

After Derby's death, the menagerie and museum were dispersed. The majority of museum specimens were bequeathed to the Liverpool Museum, becoming the core of their natural historical collections, and some of the animals were sent to the zoo at Regent's Park, London, which had been opened in 1828. In 1971, the 18th Earl of Derby opened Knowsley Park to the public as a safari park.

Scope & content

The Derby Papers consist of sixteen letters and two partial letters written primarily by Edward Smith Stanley, 13th Earl of Derby, to Thomas Reade (1785-1849) and his son Richard. From 1846 to 1851, the Reades, British consuls at Tripoli, were an important part of a network of associates that helped secure exotic animals for Derby's private menagerie at Knowsley Park. There is one letter each of Richard Reade to Derby and one from Derby to his "agent," Louis Fraser.

The Derby-Reades correspondence is concerned primarily with identifying, procuring, and shipping North African animals to Derby's estate at Knowsley, including specifics on which animals Derby considered most important and how they might be shipped. Derby's first contact with the Reades came in a letter of introduction for Louis Fraser, whom he had employed to collect animals in North Africa, seeking Thomas Reade's assistance as consul in facilitating the work.

Through time, and particularly after the death of Thomas Reade in 1849, Derby came to rely increasingly on Richard Reade to assist in collecting specimens. He was able to repay Reade for his troubles in 1850 by writing to Lord Palmerston on behalf of Reade's younger brother, Thomas, who was seeking a consular appointment. Derby later drew upon some of the political affiliates in an attempt to attach Fraser to an expedition being mounted into the interior of Africa from the North, clearly intending that Fraser would continue to act as his personal agent. In this regard, the Derby Papers offer minor insight the use of political patronage to further scientific efforts, as well as revealing both the mind and methods of an avid English collector of exotic animals exploiting Britain's colonial reach in pursuit of his passion.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

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Provenance

Acquisition Information

Acquired from William Wreden, 1985. Accession 85-460ms

Related Materials

Related Material

One additional letter of Derby's is located in the papers of John E. Gray (May 5, 1851), and Derby appears as a regular correspondent in the papers of Thomas C. Eyton (B Ey83). Other material is located in the Letters of Scientists Collections and the "Album materials" (B A11.1).

Indexing Terms

Personal Name(s)

- Fraser, Louis
- Reade, Richard
- Reade, Thomas, 1785-1849

Subject(s)

- Animals--Transportation
- Antelopes
- Beyond Early America
- Ducks

- Fennecs
- Lions
- Menageries--Great Britain
- Patronage, Political--Great Britain
- Wild animal collecting--Africa
- Zoological Society of London

Other Descriptive Information

This manuscript collection falls outside the geographic scope of the Early American guide (British North America and the United States before 1840). It may be of interest to scholars interested in global history, international relations, imperialism, or the U.S. in the world.

Correspondence

Collection Inventory

Correspondence

Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Thomas, 1785-1849	1846 February 13.	4 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Fraser, Louis	1846 May 13.	4 pp. (inc.)
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1847 February 2.	4 pp.
Reade, Richard ALS to Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851	1847 February 3.	3 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1847 March 3.	4 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Thomas, 1785-1849	1847 April 15.	3 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1848 October 4.	8 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1849 May 13.	4 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1849 August 12-23.	7 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1849 December 22.	9 pp. (inc.)

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Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1850 October 11.	4 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1850 November 6.	1 p.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1850 November 20.	1 p.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1850 November 24.	2 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1850 December 2.	4 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1851 January 25.	4 pp.
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Richard	1849?.	2 pp. (inc.)
Derby, Edward Smith Stanley, 13th earl of, 1775-1851 ALS to Reade, Thomas, 1785-1849	n.d..	1 p. (inc.)
