Speaker Pery and the Pery Papers

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Edmond Sexten Pery (Plate VI), one of Limerick City's most distinguished scions, was born in 1719 and died in 1806; he sat in the Irish House of Commons from 1751 to 1785, being three times elected Speaker (1771, 1776 and 1783); and on his retirement from the Speaker's chair in September 1785, he was made a peer as Lord Pery.[1] He was the elder son and heir of a family established in Limerick for centuries.[2] His ancestral property, which he inherited on his father's death in 1739, consisted of estates in Cos. Clare and Limerick, the principal component of which, Newtown Pery, was so near Limerick city that, although outside the walls and therefore outside the municipal and parliamentary boundaries, it gave the Perys considerable indirect influence in both municipal and parliamentary affairs. By the time of Pery's death, Newtown Pery was probably the most important and prosperous part of Limerick and the Perys could claim to own '. . . . more property than the whole of the Ancient and Loyal Corporation.'[3] It was a factor of great importance, in the history of Limerick and of the Perys, that Newtown Pery was not brought within the city boundaries until the Limerick Act, passed as late as 1853.

The Perys themselves claimed more than an indirect say in municipal and parliamentary affairs: in particular, Pery's father revived in 1737 a fairly recently recognised claim that the head of the family was entitled to an hereditary seat and *two* votes in the Limerick Common Council,[4] the unwieldy but select inner body of the corporation which exercised almost exclusive sway over the municipality, and from which almost all the city's M.P.'s were drawn. Pery senior's claim cannot have been recognised, as Pery did not become a Common Councillor until 1748.[5] In 1741, therefore, when a vacancy occurred in the parliamentary representation of Limerick, he was not a member of that inner body—indeed, barely of age. There was no further vacancy for Limerick for the next twenty years; so it was not as M.P. for Limerick that he first entered the House of Commons, but as M.P. for the close borough of Wicklow (a seat he probably purchased). Not until the general election of 1761 was he returned for Limerick, though on that occasion he was the unopposed and, it seems, universally acceptable candidate (the other seat being bitterly contested).[6] From then until his retirement in 1785, he represented Limerick without interruption or even contest, and passed on the representation, again without contest, to his nephew and eventual heir, Edmond Henry Pery, who was M.P. for Limerick from 1786 to 1794.[7]

Henry Grattan junior, in his *Memoirs* of his father and namesake, published in 1839, concluded a long panegyric on Pery with the words: '. . . . I do not know whether his name will descend to posterity; but if it does not, it is because his country, having lost her parliamentary constitution, does not now afford a mansion ample enough for his reputation.'[8] Since then Ireland has acquired new heroes. In Limerick itself, the names of the new heroes have not yet supplanted the Pery names; there are still Pery Square

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and—less obviously—Cecil, Glentworth, and Mallow Streets.[9] But though the name Pery lives on, Pery himself does not. He wanted to take the title of Viscount Limerick on his retirement in 1785, and so immortalise his relationship with his native city; but it was not to be. In 1785 there already was a Viscount Limerick, who had no traceable connection with the place, but who expressed a preference tantamount to a demand that Pery would think of something else.[10] Pery did, and in December 1785 hobbled into the Lords with the lame title of Viscount Pery of Newtown Pery, Co. Limerick. Within his lifetime, it is true, his nephew and heir, Edmond Henry Pery, was created Viscount, then Earl of Limerick (the other Limerick peerage having in the meantime died out). But, as Barrington caustically commented, Lord Limerick '. . . . bore no similitude to his illustrious uncle . . . . , [and] took a leading part in 1799 against that constitution which his uncle and benefactor had so nobly helped to establish . . . .'[11] In fact, the Limerick viscountcy was a reward for Edmond Henry Pery's support for the Union: an issue on which Pery, predictably, took the opposite line.[12]

In other respects, the 1st Lord Limerick did not add lustre, locally, to the name of Pery. Admittedly, he followed the family tradition of advanced views on the Catholic Question, and his eldest son, Lord Glentworth, was actually the unsuccessful popular candidate in the city election of 1812, and according to Lenihan was '. . . . chaired through the city with a magnificence hitherto unknown . . . .' by a crowd fifty thousand strong ('. . . . Not an accident occurred to mar the proceedings of a joyous day . . . .').[13] However, Lord Limerick had powerful motives of self-interest for espousing the popular cause in opposition to the corporation, which had tried to extend its jurisdiction to Newtown Pery; and, on the occasion of his funeral in 1844, he himself had a much less joyous and magnificent journey through Limerick than his son in 1812, a mob gathering this time for the purpose of tipping his body into the Shannon as it was on its way to the cathedral.[14] As is so often the case with Anglo-Irish landlords, particularly absentees like Lord Limerick, there was probably much more of mishap than malevolence in his dealings with his tenantry. For example, it was reported in 1835 that '. . . . Lord Limerick has been robbed most tremendously by his steward and bailiff. He had the paying of everything and for the last five or six years, not a *sou* has he paid to anyone—not even the labourers—and Limerick has got the name of paying nobody, not even his workmen. This annoys him I think, worse than the serious loss he is obliged to incur—several thousand pounds.'[15] Be that as it may, it is fair to say that Pery's reputation has been beclouded by his successor, and that his memory is not as fresh in Limerick as it ought to be. There is still a Pery Square; but it is surmounted by a statue, not to Pery, but to his great-nephew by marriage, Thomas Spring Rice, M.P. for Limerick, 1820-32, who owed his initial return to his connection with the Perys, and whose achievements at Westminster, though they raised him to Cabinet rank and the Chancellorship of the Exchequer, 1835-9, are not to be compared with Pery's in the pre-Union Irish House of Commons.

PERY THROUGH CONTEMPORARY EYES

The obvious starting-point for a consideration of Pery's place in Irish history is the judgments of contemporaries and near-contemporaries. These, as is often the case, are a surprisingly varied lot, the variation in this case being from the hagiographic to the scurrilous. Barrington, whose low opinion of the 1st Lord Limerick has already been quoted, is among the hagiographic; according to Barrington, Pery was '. . . . a person in whose integrity the House, the nation and the government reposed the greatest con-

fidence; a man in whose pure character spirit, dignity, independence of mind and honesty of principle were eminently conspicuous; . . . . to the moment of his death he never departed from the line of rectitude which marked every step of his progress through life . . . .'[16] Henry Grattan senior thought much the same, and was more specific; according tc him, Pery was '. . . . the first man who in the parliament of this age denied the supremacy of Great Britain, the first man who conceived a demand of [Free] Trade, and the person who in his closet [*i.e.* the Speaker's chamber] formed and drew the most productive acts for the strength and prosperity of this country . . . .'[17]—a tribute which other, harder, evidence largely sustains. Francis Hardy, toc, the biographer of Lord Charlemont, considered '. . . . that there was scarcely any great public measure adopted in Ireland whilst Lord Pery engaged in business, which had not its seminal principle in his comprehensive mind. . . . . In truth, he saw further before him than almost any man of his time. . . . . He was perhaps one of the best Speakers that ever sat in the chair of any House of Commons.'[18] And Henry Grattan junior, who borrowed largely and without attribution from Hardy, broke new ground when he declared that Pery

> '. . . . was a political chemist, and had the peculiar talent to diminish in any question the bad, and increase the good, quality . . . . Men [of all parties] resorted to him as to an oracle . . . . He knew how to extricate himself from popularity and from confidence. . . . He considered it below the first Commoner of the Kingdom to be . . . . a Minister of the King or a leader of the people . . . . The love of power, the love of patronage, to which the most immaculate politicians have yielded, had with him neither weight nor attraction.'[19]

Other contemporaries or near-contemporaries had no such tributes to pay. In particular, many others disputed Pery's superiority over the attractions of patronage and power. Lord Chief Justice Scott, 1st Earl of Clonmell, bracketed him with the notorious Hely-Hutchinson, and called the pair of them 'old, adverse, watchful jobbers'; in his view—and the comment was not entirely uncomplimentary—Pery was 'the best model of worldly wisdom now extant.'[20] A Castle-compiled list of the members of the Irish parliament of 1768-76 thought Pery had '. . . a head well filled with Machiavellian brains. He exactly squares with the office whereunto he is now appointed [the Speakership]. A man haughty and singular, he looks well to his own profit; has risen his estate £900 per annum by parliamentary grants to the lands about Limerick, without having his name mentioned; is rather bold than bashful, patient, wary and of few words . . . .';[21] and another list, compiled later in the same parliament, called him '. . . . a cursed jobber . . . . [who] hates English government and tries by all means in his power to ruin the King's Hereditary Revenue and to raise the consequence of Irishmen by inducing every possible difficulty upon the Crown. This gentleman's art, subtlety and address are more to be guarded against than the abilities and craft of the Attorney General [Philip Tisdall] and the whole House of Commons besides.'[22] Obviously, such comments, emanating from the Castle and applied to a powerful protagonist of Irish rights, are to be taken at a discount; the same discount is to be taken from the verdict of the Lord Lieutenant who was forced to concede the Constitution of 1782, that Pery was ' . . . . the hollowest, most cunning, intriguing and hitherto successful knave in this kingdom . . . .'[23] Yet the opposition, too, was not sparing of its indictments. In 1774 he was thus abused by the opposition organ, *The Freeman's Journal:* 'You stand, a mere official tool, a feather in the scale of this very party [the supporters of the administration] which you in appearance so zealously opposed; a nominal Speaker, without power, without a particle of free agency, a prostitute of the most eminent degree.'[24] Moreover, during his lifetime, as

after his death, he seems to have been wounded in reputation through the side of his less admirable nephew, the 1st Lord Limerick. Writing in 1803, the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, an Englishman with a strong animus against everything and everybody Irish, declared:

> '. . . . [Lord Limerick's] views are grossly selfish . . . . [He] has established himself in England, deserting Ireland, and will stick like a leech. He is of the true Pery blood, and like all his family never content without a job. He thinks he can attract to himself a large portion of the influence and consequence of Ireland, and will be found, I fear, a most troublesome ally and as insatiable of subsidy as the Landgrave of Hesse, as the meanest of the meanest of German Princes.'[25]

THE PERY PAPERS

As might be expected the truth about Speaker Pery lies somewhere in the middle ground between the hagiographic and the scurrilous; and, as also might be expected, the surviving Pery Papers are the surest single guide there is to where the truth lies. The papers fall into two categories, the first of them considerably sub-divided. The first, and more important, category passed from Pery, not to Lord Limerick, but to his sister's family, the Monsells of Tervoe, Co. Limerick, in 1874 created Lords Emly. This category consists of all Pery's political papers, which have thus come to be distinguished (or disguised) by the name, Emly Papers. Why these should have passed to the Emlys is not altogether clear; but the descent of family papers is often erratic and divorced from family titles and estates. It is possible that Pery entrusted them to his anti-Unionist nephew, William Monsell,[26] in preference to his Unionist nephew, Lord Limerick, because some degree of personal estrangement had followed his political estrangement from Lord Limerick on the bitterly divisive issue of the Union. Certainly, the account given by one of Pery's two daughters (he had no son) of the immediate aftermath of her father's death suggests that she personally, and perhaps her whole branch of the family, was not intimate with Lord Limerick.[27] The Pery estate was settled on Lord Limerick, as the only son of Pery's only brother; Pery's political papers obviously were not, so in the disposal of them he was a free agent. Significantly, all the Pery papers relating to Pery's forebears and to the estate passed, not to the Monsells, but to Lord Limerick. This is the second category of Pery papers; and just as the first has come to be distinguished by the name, Emly, so the second has come to be distinguished by the name Limerick. The division is purely fortuitous and is unfortunate. However, granted its existence, it is no bad system to call the collection as a whole *Pery Papers*, and the two parts *Emly* and *Limerick* respectively.

The Emly Papers—Pery's political papers—are not numerous (400 items in all), but they make up in quality what they lack in quantity. In 1881 and 1895 the Historical Manuscripts Commission published a two-part report on them, the first part covering the period 1756-79, the second 1780-98.[28] This report is not a calendar, in that it does not give a mention, however summary, to every document in the collection; instead, it is a series of transcripts of 160 selected documents, the basis of selection being unstated and also being unsound. Equally unsound is the quality of the transcription, the identification of individuals and the dating of undated items. This would not matter, if it were possible now to re-do the work of the Historical Manuscripts Commission. Unfortunately, it is not. The surviving originals of the

Emly Papers were sold by a London firm of dealers to the Huntington Library, California, in 1926; but it would seem that the 350-odd documents in the Huntington Library do not include some 45 letters formerly at Tervoe and reported on by the H.M.C. The most important gap in the Huntington collection are Pery's drafts or copies of his speeches, pamphlets and out-going letters, which are arguably the most significant part of the H.M.C. Report, and almost all of which went missing at some point between 1895 and 1926. In compensation for this, the Huntington collection seems to contain no less than 238 in-letters which were omitted from the report. Many of these are decidedly less important than those included in it; but many are quite as important, and were omitted for no obvious or good reason (or, rather, for the bad reason that the majority of them were undated, and the editor of the report wanted to save himself the trouble of dating them). It would be reassuring if the assumption could be made that the 45-odd items present in the report but missing from the Huntington originals, plus the 238 items present in the Huntington originals but missing from the report, constituted the whole of the Emly Papers. However, there is no authority for such an assumption, and it may well be that many items missing from the report are missing from the originals as well. In 1973 there was a flutter of excitement (erroneously created by the present writer) when a volume containing 234 late nineteenth or early twentieth century copies of Emly Papers turned up in the possession of a collector who had purchased it at the Tervoe auction in 1951. However, such collation with the Huntington originals as has so far been possible, suggests that none, or virtually none, of these 234 is 'new.' There was a further flutter of excitement last year when another volume of copies, containing 95 letters, turned up in the possession of a great-granddaughter of the 1st Lord Emly. But it is now quite certain that all 95 are present among the Huntington originals (and that the standard of copying is decidedly poorer than that of the other volume).[29] Somewhere, it may be, the Emly Papers missing from the Huntington collection are still extant, together perhaps with Emly Papers which have never before come to light.[30] If so, it is to be hoped that their owner reads this article.

By comparison with the Emly Papers, the Limerick Papers have had a straightforward, uneventful history requiring no complicated collating and no detective-work. In view of the absenteeism, by and large, of the Earls of Limerick from 1800 onwards, this is in itself surprising. In one sense, absenteeism is good for archives. If an Irish landlord lives in England, or owns estates in more than one part of Ireland, he has to be written to about the affairs of the estate where he is not actually resident. This accounts for the extraordinary richness of collections such as the Abercorn and Downshire Papers in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, the Palmerston Papers in the Hampshire Record Office, the Devonshire Papers at Chatsworth, in Derbyshire, and many lesser collections besides. In another sense absenteeism is bad for archives. If an Irish landlord, once resident in Ireland, decides to move to England, it is very doubtful whether he will take his family letters, far less the contents of his estate office, with him. (A recent survey of one-time Irish landlords now living in Great Britain which was carried out by P.R.O.N.I. yielded disappointing results, the reason being mainly the obvious one that 'The Big House' had been burnt during 'The Troubles.'[31]) Fortunately, a small minority of one-time Irish landlords and residents, prominent among whom are the Earls of Limerick, have been a match even for the Irish genius for destroying the country's archives. The interesting thing about the Limerick Papers is that they stop almost dead in 1800—the time when the 1st

Lord Limerick ceased to be resident—and must at some time have been deliberately removed to England, where he lived almost constantly until his death in 1844. A similar case is the papers of the Earls of Shannon, some of which were left behind at their Irish seat, Castlemartyr, Co. Cork, and have found their way into the National Library, but most of which were deliberately removed to England, and have recently been deposited in P.R.O.N.I.[32]

The main importance of the Limerick Papers lies in the (by Irish standards) antiquity of the estate and legal material which they contain. The Pery property in Limerick consisted of the lands of two abbeys, St. Mary's and St. Francis's, granted to the Perys' ancestor, Edmond Sexten, by Henry VIII after the Dissolution. (St. Francis's Abbey lay in the Englishtown, and was alleged by the corporation in the late 1730s to be 'an asylum for papists;'[33] Newtown Pery, formerly the South Prior's Land, lay to the south, and was not renamed until 1769, when Speaker Pery began the building programme upon it which, according to Lenihan, raised Limerick to the position of the third city in Ireland.)[34] The quality of this material may be gauged from the report made by the National Register of Archives in London (a modern off-shoot of the H.M.C.) in 1961, when the Limerick Papers were still in the keeping of Lord Limerick's London bank. This report takes the form of a detailed bundle list of the whole collection, followed by a calendar of the fourteenth and fifteenth century deeds. The papers have since been deposited in the National Library (thus making a return journey to Ireland), but the chaotic family bundling system still stands, so that the old N.R.A. report remains an essential tool. As far as Speaker Pery is concerned, the Limerick Papers are of limited importance as a source. They contain virtually no letters to or from him. The papers which are contemporary with him are those of his younger brother, Rev. William Cecil Pery, Bishop of Limerick, 1784-94, in 1790 created 1st Lord Glentworth, and of the Bishop's son and successor, Edmond Henry Pery, later 1st Lord Limerick. These relate mainly to the Bishop's unepiscopal (but for a Church of Ireland bishop, not unusual) activities as agent for two local estates—the Wray estate of Rathcannon, Rathmore, etc., of which Speaker Pery had inherited a small portion through his grandmother, and Lord Shelburne's estate of Farranshone; and they relate also to Edmond Henry's travels, observations and hob-nobbing with various dignitaries, while on the grand tour in the late 1770s, to his fencible regiment in the 1790s and to other military matters. (Of extreme interest to the local historian are poll-books for the Limerick city and county elections of 1761.[35]) However, because the Bishop and the Speaker were on close terms, and the former was the latter's heir, the Limerick Papers inevitably shed refracted light on Speaker Pery. The Bishop's lamentations, in his capacity of estate agent, about the deplorable state of the Irish economy in the 1770s, even before the American war,[36] form an important background to the Speaker's contemporary campaign, in parliament and behind the scenes, for an extension of Irish trade; and the Bishop's remarkable, though hardly meteoric, rise in the church constitutes a considerable part of the charge that the Speaker was corrupt and a jobber.

PERY AND THE POLITICAL MORALITY OF HIS TIMES

It is axiomatic that a man's or a family's papers almost always portray them in a favourable light; few people are ever condemned out of their own or their correspondents' mouths. Yet, although this is axiomatic to anyone with the least experience of

family papers, it is often far from axiomatic to their owners. The descendants of prominent people are often foolish in their tenderness for the reputations of their ancestors, and instead of throwing their papers open, lock the non-existent skeletons away in cupboards. The truth of the axiom is easily demonstrable in the case of the Pery, and particularly the Emly, Papers: without them, Speaker Pery would suffer immeasurably in reputation. To take one simple—perhaps over-simple—example. The Lord Lieutenant of 1782, who described him as 'the hollowest, most cunning, intriguing and hitherto successful knave in this kingdom,' obviously did not do so in a letter to Pery. Three weeks earlier, however, he had written to Pery in answer to a letter asking that Pery's brother be made Bishop of Limerick in the event of the death of the present incumbent. The letter to Pery, which is among the published Emly Papers, begins: 'I am mortified to think you should conceive so unfavourably of the opinion I entertain of your character, abilities and high station as to feel any reluctance in communicating to me any wish of yours . . . .'; and ends: 'I shall be glad of an opportunity of . . . . convincing you of the respect which is due to your eminent qualities.'[37] In Pery's day, when letters addressed *to* a man were characterised by a much more flamboyant courtesy than at the present time, and when letters *about* a man were characterised by a much more telling and vigorous turn of phrase, the contrast between what is said in a man's own papers, and what is said about him in someone else's is especially marked.

The Pery Papers tend thus to endorse the hagiographic as opposed to the scurrilous view of Pery (and for this reason have to be interpreted with some caution). The published Emly Papers, in particular, contain copies of letters which he wrote at some of the high points in his career—especially copies of his letters to the British Prime Minister, Lord North, at the height of the Free Trade crisis late in 1779, and to the British Home Secretary, Lord Shelburne, just before the winning of the Constitution of 1782; and these eminently display his firmness and statesmanship in pressing Ireland's demands and his refusal to be overawed or flattered in the smallest degree by what his high-placed correspondents had written to him.[38] (There is also an entertaining minute of a conversation between Pery and Lord Shelburne, by then Prime Minister, in October 1782, in the course of which Pery, acting as spokesman for the Limerick provision merchants, put Lord Shelburne firmly in his place).[39] Even more than the published panegyrics of the Grattans, Barrington and Francis Hardy, even more than Pery's speeches to the Lord Lieutenant when presenting Money Bills for the royal assent (which are printed in the Irish *Commons' Journals* and are models of straight talking), these copies of his letters establish Pery's reputation as a statesman and (if so emotive and diversely interpreted a phrase may be permitted) as a great Irishman.

If the Pery Papers highlight all that is creditable in Pery's career, they also give no aid and comfort to the charges that it had its discreditable features. They are silent about his alleged parliamentary jobbery on behalf of Newtown Pery.[40] They are almost silent on the other equivocal matter already referred to, Rev. William Pery's ecclesiastical progress through two deaneries and a bishopric until he finally attained the bishopric of Limerick; and what they have to say is, if anything favourable to the Bishop (though not to the Speaker). William Pery was made a bishop in 1781. So far was this event from taking him by surprise that he had anticipated it by nearly a year, as is shown by a letter in the Limerick Papers from him to a female relative in London. Having announced his probable elevation to the bishopric of Killala, he

continues, in an innocently worldly vein:

> '. . . . And now, my dear Madam, I must beg leave to be troublesome to you by plaguing you with a commission for me. As we are soon to have a new Lord Lieutenant [Lord Carlisle]—I hear somewhat of the *beau* and very dressy—I think it necessary to rub off part of the rust I have contracted by a long residence in the country; and for that purpose I must buy me two new, fashionable gowns, *etc.*, of such materials as are not to be got in Ireland, notwithstanding our boasted manufactures [a reference to the recent Free Trade agitation]. I therefore request you will have bought for me . . . . [two] gowns, [two] cassocks, [two] scarfs or tippets and [two] girdles, to be made up in London by one of the best and most fashionable gown-makers, for a man of five feet ten inches high, and rather corpulent. The sleeves of the gowns are to be what they call pudding sleeves, the kind always worn by dignified clergymen and bishops. Thus furnished, I may pass muster even before Lord Carlisle.'[41]

At the same time, there was an unworldly and a serious side to William Pery's concept of the episcopal function, once he came to exercise it. Writing, as Bishop of Limerick, to his brother, now Lord Pery, in 1789, he sorrowfully but firmly reiterates his refusal to comply with Pery's request regarding a living in the diocese:

> '. . . . it grieved me excessively, and still continues to do so, that I was obliged to refuse your request in favour of Mr. Hoare's exchange with his son, but I got the young man appointed resident preacher at the cathedral, worth [to] him about forty guineas a year, which is pretty well for a young man but little more than two years in orders. I never did, nor never will, express my resentment at the application, nor I never said anything harsh upon the occasion, nor ever shall, more than I had made an absolute resolution never to agree to the resignation of his living, the best in the three dioceses, to his son; for if I did, I must do the same for others who had stronger calls on me than Mr. Hoare, and [I] would not make a precedent that would be highly unjust and ungenerous to all the clergy in the diocese.
>
> But the matter of fact is this, that they are so eager for this change to get for the son a wife of £1,400 or £1,500 fortune, which the father is to put in his pocket, so that the business would be absolutely simoniacal, which I am persuaded you [would] never wish me to countenance, or to do a dishonourable thing for any person whatsoever, contrary to my conscience . . . .
>
> Had Mr. and Mrs. Hoare not lived above their income and entertained more company for many years than any person in this town [Limerick], they might have provided exceedingly well for their families. They still continue the same course, and even at the very time Mr. Hoare wrote to you, he gave the next day a great entertainment to a house full of people, instead of retrenching for his two daughters and a son in the College [T.C.D.].
>
> I have mentioned these things to you as a further confirmation of my absolute determination never to agree to this resignation, and I beg you will excuse my keeping it. Let me then assure you that there is nothing on earth I would refuse you that I could do consistent with my conscience and honour, which I hope I shall never forfeit; for, indeed, I love you more than all the world besides, and so I ought, for to you I entirely owe my present situation.'[42]

This letter, which is among the unpublished Emly Papers, can surely be taken at face value, with no discount for bias, as a frank and full expression of a view? It is a

reminder that, while parliamentary influence (in this case Speaker Pery's) made bishops, it did not necessarily make bishops who were unfit for the situation or unmindful of its higher responsibilities. Indeed, what is most significant about William Pery's ecclesiastical career is that, although his brother was one of the most influential members of parliament from 1751 to 1785 (and even in his first two decades by no means always in opposition)[43], William Pery did not become a dean until 1772, when he was fifty, and a bishop until 1781, when he was fifty-nine.[44]

The one dubious feature of William Pery's career was not his elevation to the episcopal bench, but his elevation to the Irish peerage as Lord Glentworth in 1790; and about this episode the Pery Papers are altogether silent. In 1894, the nationalist M.P., J. G. Swift MacNeill, re-published a series of articles in a book which he called *Titled Corruption*, and which was in effect a series of family character assassinations aimed primarily at those Irish peers who had opposed the second Home Rule Bill in the House of Lords (where the 3rd Earl of Limerick was at that time the Conservative Whip). MacNeill's comment on the Glentworth title—and a comment typical of the whole book—is: 'This was one of the peerages which Grattan . . . . offered to prove had been sold for hard cash and laid out in the purchase of members of the House of Commons.'[45] This is a slight distortion. However, hard documentary evidence—not of course from the Pery Papers—confirms the substance of the allegation.[46] What seems to have happened is that a negotiation was opened in 1789 between the Irish government, which had recently been defeated on the famous Regency address and Edmond Henry Pery, then M.P. for Limerick City, who had contributed to that defeat. He now not only promised his support, but promised to bring into the House at the forthcoming general election two other supporters as well, both to be nominated by the government; in return, his father was to be made a peer. The peerage, in other words, was not actually 'sold for hard cash,' although the two seats had of course to be purchased with that commodity, and seem in fact to have cost 4,000 guineas; and the cash was spent, not on 'the purchase of members of the House of Commons' (which sounds like bribery of sitting members), but on the return of two government nominees at the general election of 1790. Transactions of this kind were not uncommon(though they were barely creditable, even by contemporary standards of political morality), and were to become all too common at the time of the Union. The best defence that can be made for them is that they never went beyond aspirants to the peerage who qualified, socially and economically, for that honour by possessing an assured landed income of a certain level. Had he lived to inherit his brother's estate (popularly reckoned as worth £8,000 a year in 1806[47]), William Pery would easily have qualified—indeed would have had strong claims—for a peerage, the more so since one had previously existed in the family and had expired through failure of heirs male. In this sense, then, the Glentworth peerage of 1790 was only an anticipation of future events; and the trafficking in parliamentary seats was the proximate, but not the sole, reason for its creation.

Lord Pery's views on the circumstances of its creation are unknown. The borough patron from whom the two seats were purchased, Lord Lucan, was an intimate of his and is one of the principal correspondents in the Emly Papers, so Lord Pery is likely to have been an intermediary in the transaction, and certainly cannot have been innocent of the knowledge. (Indeed, it is doubtful whether William Pery could have produced so large a sum as 4,000 guineas without Lord Pery's help). It is a strange incongruity that the two brothers should have been raised to the peerage, within

five years of each other, on such radically different terms: the elder as the result of a unanimous address from the House of Commons that some signal 'mark of favour' be given him by the King for his services in the chair,[48] the younger as the result of a barely creditable deal with Dublin Castle concerning the packing of that House, and in the teeth of objections from the King (who deplored the alleged precedent of making a spiritual peer a temporal peer as well).[49] However, such were the nuances and complexities of contemporary political morality that incongruities of this sort abound. To follow Henry Grattan junior in naive adulation of Speaker Pery's immaculacy is to turn a blind eye to these nuances and complexities, although Pery's career in fact provides a remarkable illustration of them. In an age which was, by modern standards, corrupt, Pery knew his value; which, adapting Oscar Wilde's famous aphorism, is not to say that he had his price.

The circumstances behind the unanimous address from the House of Commons on the occasion of his retirement demonstrate the value which he, just as much as the House, set upon his services and himself. His retirement followed closely on the dropping of Pitt's Commercial Propositions after their near-defeat in the Irish House of Commons in August 1785. Pery had always had reservations about the Commercial Propositions, fearing in particular that the British parliament would alter the terms on which they had passed the Irish parliament earlier in the year. In March his usual straight-talking speech on presenting the Money Bills for the royal assent began with words which were ostensibly retrospective in their application, but which in the context can only have been taken as prospective too:

> 'No system of government or of commerce can be secure or permanent which is not founded in justice. Of this truth the history of every great empire affords sufficient proofs, and none more than the British. But, however evident in theory this truth may have been at all times to thinking men, it seems to have had little influence upon the councils of nations till within these few years, when experience, dearly purchased, had removed those prejudices which misled their understandings and opened their eyes to their own interest.' (Then follows a specific reference to the Commercial Propositions.)[50]

As Pery feared, the British parliament did alter the Irish propositions—their constitutional shadows much more than their economic substance. In May he warned the Irish government, prophetically: 'If it is attempted to be forced, you may possibly succeed, though that appears to me uncertain, but you will lay the foundation of much discontent in both kingdoms . . . .'; and in July, in another letter among the published Emly Papers, he reverted to the theme of his presenting speech:

> '. . . . The duration of the system must depend upon its proving advantageous to both kingdoms in its operation. If either kingdom shall find itself materially injured by it, the legislature of such kingdom will not hold itself bound to support it, and without such support it cannot long subsist. It is impossible to bind the legislature by any act of parliament: the British resolutions import such an intention.'[51]

When the government did not act on his advice, he turned instead to the opposition and gave the benefit of it to them; to such an extent that, after the dropping of the propositions, one prominent government supporter, John Beresford, Chief Commissioner of the Revenue, regarded Pery as having been 'at the bottom of all the late mischief.'[52]

For some time prior to this, Pery, who was now sixty-six, had been negotiating

with the government over the terms of his retirement from the Speakership. Indeed, it had been widely rumoured that he would not stand for re-election at the start of the 1783 parliament. Agreement had not so far been reached, presumably because the government thought his terms too high. He now renewed the application, and again was turned down—not surprisingly in view of the fallen state of his credit with the government at this particular juncture. Next he turned to the opposition, with whom his credit stood correspondingly high, informed them of his intention to resign and secured an undertaking that one of them would move an address that a reward suitable to his services should be given him. This immediately started off a canvass for the Speakership, and threw the government into consternation. Elections for the Speakership were always a tricky business from the government point of view, its influence and choice of candidates being surprisingly limited and the chances of defeat dangerously great. (Were this not so, the government of 1771 would never have backed Pery in the first place, and only did so to keep out a still less acceptable rival). In these circumstances, the timing of the election was vital, and its timing depended solely on Pery. In order to get him to resign at the time which they judged (rightly) to be most advantageous to it, the government was obliged to agree to the terms he had previously proposed and it had previously rejected. As one opposition member put it, crudely but with substantial truth, Pery had '. . . . made his bargain for the chair . . . .'[53] Even then, the bargain took a long time to be ratified; not until nearly two months later did the British government agree to the recommendation of the Irish government that he be made a viscount and be given a pension of £3,000 a year.[54] On the whole, Pery's manoeuvrings on this occasion, all carried out within a couple of days, fully justify the earlier Castle commentator's dread, already referred to, of his 'art, subtlety and address.' Although he was never to know it, he had in fact created the precedent that a retiring Speaker is entitled to both a viscountcy and a pension, a precedent which has been faithfully followed in the British parliament from 1817 almost to the present day.

The circumstances of Pery's retirement have been examined in detail because they illustrate three points. First, they are a further example of a dubious episode not touched on in the Pery Papers and brought to light only by the papers of other people. Second, they show that in Pery's day and in Pery's hands the Speakership occupied strategically vital ground between government and opposition, and was free to help and advise either, or indeed to play one off against the other. Third, they show that Pery was not 'immaculate,' in the sense in which Grattan junior used the word. At the same time, it is important to remember that a viscountcy and £3,000 a year was a reward entirely appropriate to his distinguished services (his successor as Speaker received £5,000), particularly when compared with the rewards meted out to others for services which were not only not distinguished but were not even reputable. Whatever had been given him in the past for his brother and other *proteges*, Pery personally had been given no office and no emolument apart from the Speakership and its sessional allowance; the Speakership he owed primarily to his own qualities as a candidate, and the allowance probably did little more than cover the necessary expenditure of the office. Under these circumstances, the viscountcy and £3,000 a year were no more than he was worth. In any case, in securing them he had compromised on no point of principle or of policy—certainly not on the Commercial Propositions. Of such a compromise he was probably incapable. In the course of his political career, he must have sought and obtained many things from the government

of the day. Yet it is not clear that he ever changed his political course significantly with a view to having his requests granted and his ambitions fulfilled or that when they were granted and fulfilled he ever changed it significantly out of a sense of obligation.

His highest ambition, as he himself declared in the House at the time of his election in March 1771, was the Speakership. It had been an avowed ambition since at least 1767. Yet, it is abundantly clear that he did not change, or need to change, his political course in order to attain the Speakership, and it is at best doubtful if he changed his political course afterwards out of gratitude. The Emly Papers are, unfortunately, silent on this episode and, indeed, on this period of his life. The standard version of how he became Speaker is Lord Charlemont's, written some years after the event; according to Charlemont, Pery's '. . . . connections with opposition (among whom, though now esteemed a courtier, he had long taken a leading part), by dividing that party ensured his success.'[55] If the intention of the 'now' is to suggest that Pery was 'esteemed a courtier' by the opposition in March 1771, Charlemont is wide of the mark. Pery had in general opposed the administration of Lord Townshend, the Lord Lieutenant under whose auspices he was elected Speaker.[56] Moreover, in March 1771 strong and signal instances of his disposition to oppose the administration were very fresh in mind. In the previous session, in the early winter of 1769, he had been prominent in successfully opposing the main Money Bill on the ground that it had originated, not with the Irish House of Commons, but with the British Privy Council (an action against which Townshend later protested formally, and on account of which he prorogued parliament long before prorogation was due). When the House of Commons adopted the usual face-saving formula of reintroducing the same Money Bill as a measure of its own, Pery proposed or was associated with successful amendments, one of which Townshend regarded as so pernicious that he advised the British Privy Council to delete it, even at the risk of losing the whole bill.[57] Then, when parliament reassembled after its long prorogation, in February 1771, Pery carried an amendment to the address to the King which Townshend described, in an official dispatch, as '. . . . an artful justification of what the House voted last session, and a fresh, though indirect, assertion of their [sole] right to originate Money Bills . . . .' (It must have caused much amazement among the British ministers when Townshend's very next despatch, which due to bad weather arrived on the same day, 15 March, announced that Pery had been elected Speaker with the full backing of Townshend and the Castle.[58]) In view of these circumstances, it is hard to see how anyone could have esteemed Pery a courtier in March 1771, or how Edmund Burke could have justified his remark that Pery's 'throne' was 'erected on Poynings's Law.'[59] The more penetrating remark came from an experienced Castle veteran, Thomas Waite: ' . . . . it is hardly to be imagined that the English ministry would have consented to the appointment of a man who has been for years the most inveterate enemy to this government, and who so lately as in the amendment which he proposed to the address to the King the week before last gave as strong a proof as possible that he was not disposed to place [*i.e.* to take office] . . . .' In fact Townshend, who could easily have adjourned parliament and awaited instructions from London, was careful to give the British government no opportunity to instruct him.[60] The choice of Pery was entirely Townshend's own, and in making it he closed his eyes to Pery's previous form and, quite simply, backed a hunch.

He told the British government, of course, that it was not just a hunch, as Pery

had '. . . . assured me in the strongest manner of his good wishes to government, and the obligation he will have to it . . . .'[61] How heavily this obligation weighed with Pery, and to what extent it changed his future political course, is not clear. This is not clear, and Pery poses a problem to the student of political morality, for the obvious reason that, from 1771 until his retirement from the House, he was Speaker, and as such had only limited opportunities for public pronouncements on political subjects. His only opportunities were, in fact, his presenting speeches, the committee stage of bills (when the Speaker was not in the chair) and the rare eventuality of an equality of votes in a division, when the Speaker had a casting vote. For the rest, his influence lay behind the scenes, and information about the way in which he used it depends on the accidents of survival of his own and other people's papers. It is therefore hard to know whether he allowed himself to be deflected from his political course, because it is hard to know what his political course was. At the close of the 1771 session, in which he had been elected Speaker, we know that he used his influence behind the scenes to moderate the language of the concluding address to Townshend;[62] but we do not know to what extent this move was inspired by gratitude to Townshend for his election. What we do know, however, is that in the next session he gave a casting vote against Townshend on a measure dear to Townshend's heart and vital to his policy, the division of the Revenue Board.[63] We also know that he was a source of great embarrassment to the succeeding administration, in the course of which he delivered (in December 1773) his most outspoken presenting speech of all, expressing the hope

> '. . . . that those restrictions, which the narrow and short-sighted policy of former times, equally injurious to Great Britain and to us, imposed upon the manufactures and commerce of this kingdom, will be remitted . . . .';[64]

and (in March 1774) that he made a further, unscheduled speech in the House designed to widen the definition of what was a Money Bill, and so extend the authority of the House of Commons at the expense, almost certainly, of the British Privy Council.[65]

Again, we know that, after the next general election, in 1776, the same administration exerted itself to get him re-elected Speaker, holding a two-day session of parliament purely for that purpose and returning to it three people who sat for those two days only and were raised to the peerage as soon as their votes for Pery were cast;[66] yet from the unpublished Emly Papers we also know that from June 1774 until the summer of 1775 Pery was seriously alarmed that his conduct in the previous session had been such that the administration might exert itself to defeat, rather than support, him next time;[67] and though it did in the end support him wholeheartedly, there is no suggestion that any pledge of good behaviour had been forthcoming from Pery and, in fact, his conduct as Speaker of the 1776 parliament, particularly over Free Trade in 1779 and the Constitution of 1782, was very far from that of a ministerial hireling. We know that, during the crucial period of 1779-82, at least one attempt was made on his political virtue, since a letter making such an attempt survives in the published Emly Papers, written by someone who had been negotiating on his behalf with the British government for William Pery's first bishopric:

> '. . . . If you shall think fit to authorise me to give explicit assurance that you and your brother may be depended on as the sincere and steady friends of administration, I cannot but entertain great hope of succeeding in my application, and without it I much doubt whether my interference will answer the purpose . . . .'[68]

We do not know, however, whether the 'explicit assurance' was forthcoming; and from what is known of Pery's character and of his sense of what was due to his high office, it seems unlikely that he would have delivered himself gagged and bound to any administration, or that he would have supported from 'compact' rather than 'conviction.'[69] After all, his importance was so great that administrations must have been prepared to oblige him in the hope of winning his support, without extracting an 'explicit assurance' of support as the condition of the obligement. Conveniently, the only 'explicit assurance' which he was required to give in return for William Pery's second and infinitely preferable bishopric, that of Limerick, was that he would not retire but stand for re-election to the Speakership in 1783 (the administration was afraid that, if he retired, there would be a contest which it might lose).[70] On the whole, there is no hard evidence that he ever 'departed from the line of rectitude' (in Barrington's sententious phrase, already quoted), provided always that 'rectitude' is used in a sense which is not foreign to eighteenth century political morality.

PERY'S PLACE IN IRISH HISTORY

It would be wrong to leave the impression that the problems of charting Pery's political course are created solely by the fact that he was Speaker: they are created also by the kind of politician he was. During the twenty years prior to his election to the Speakership in which he was a member of parliament, he had generally followed an individualistic course, judging questions on their merits and glorying in the fact that he was not a party man. People of course looked to him for leadership, but this was largely a matter of spontaneous deference to his ability. Moreover, the party of which he was supposed to be the leader in the late 1750s and early 1760s was nicknamed, significantly, 'the flying squadron,' and it was not always predictable on which side of a question they would alight.[71] This kind of political course sometimes placed him in strange relationships with the administration of the day; in 1763, for example, the Chief Secretary—a personal friend—submitted for Pery's private comments draft resolutions which the administration was going to move on the subject of the Peace of Paris, and added: '. . . . I really hope and believe that you will think what is now proposed extremely improper on our part, and that of course it will be extremely satisfactory on yours.'[72] Only once, when he was green in politics, did Pery definitely align himself with a particular administration: the Duke of Dorset's in the period 1751-55. Viewed with historical hindsight, this seems a strange choice, as the Dorset administration ended in failure and obloquy. Yet, recent research reveals what the obloquy had concealed: that to some extent the failure of the Dorset administration derived from a genuine attempt to reform abuses, particularly in the Revenue — the sort of attempt which would have appealed to a politician of Pery's stamp.[73] (Interestingly, in Pery's cynical but well-balanced account of the Dorset administration and its successor, which is among the published Emly Papers, he omits all mention of himself as an active partisan in the struggles he is describing, and the *D.N.B.* confuses the picture further by putting him on the wrong side in the Money Bill dispute of 1753.[74]) It may be conjectured that his novitiate under Primate Stone (the man who conducted the Dorset administration to disaster) was an experience he never forgot. He would probably never have acquired that equilibrium in tempestuous times which was later to be his foremost political characteristic if he had not gone overboard during the bitter party conflict of the period 1752-56.[75]

Among the published Emly Papers there is a letter to Pery from Townshend, the

former Lord Lieutenant, dated 1778, which includes the world-weary and worldly-wise comment: '. . . . I am convinced that a man will always be more respected by government for distressing than assisting it . . . .'[76] This was a conviction which Pery did not share. Some of the most unvarying government supporters among his contemporaries and near-contemporaries had originally brought themselves to the notice of the government by distressing it and acquiring a nuisance value; which was something Pery never set out to do. Nor was he ever an unvarying supporter of the government, except under the Dorset administration; and during his tenure of the Speakership, his relationship with the government rested on the purely pragmatic basis that he was the least obnoxious Speaker they had any hope of getting. Considering Pery's career, the phrase, 'even tenour,' springs to mind; there were no oscillations, no extremes. He remained throughout 'a political chemist,' as Grattan junior aptly described him, working always to diminish what was bad in measures and increase what was good. He was the only Irish politician of the second half of the eighteenth century who contrived to strike a balance between government and opposition, and he was, in effect, a 'patriot' in power.[77] This was something which Flood tried to be, and failed, and which Grattan would never try at all. Of course there was a world of difference, *qua* offices, between the Speakership and Flood's stigmatic Vice-Treasurership. But, on the other hand, the mediating role of the Speakership in Pery's hands had as much to do with the man as it had with the office; and there was also the important difference that Pery was a man of much sounder judgment than Flood, or for that matter Grattan.

At the same time, some bounds have to be set to Pery's ultimate historical significance, and these bounds are chronological. There most certainly *is* a tide in the affairs of men, and Pery caught it. He was born, or more important, entered the House of Commons, at just the right time. Francis Hardy was of course correct in saying that Pery '. . . . saw further before him than almost any man of his time . . . .'; there are several examples of his gift for short-term prophecy in matters relating to parliamentary tactics and timing, and one of them, his gloomy forecast about the prospects for the Commercial Propositions, has been quoted. Yet the fact that nearly all the causes which he espoused—an Irish Habeas Corpus Act, a limitation in the duration of parliaments, annual parliamentary sessions, a change in the tenure of the judges, Free Trade, the modification of Poynings's Law, and so on—came to fruition in his lifetime as an M.P., can hardly be attributed to a spirit of divination on Pery's part.[78] He pre-eminently displayed the characteristic of consistency; but consistency is a political vice rather than a virtue, unless the times are right. The times *were* right for Pery. In 1756 he had written an extremely effective pamphlet, among the published Emly Papers, ridiculing the newly elected Speaker, John Ponsonby, for going through the time-honoured ritual of affecting to decline the honour of the Speakership (for which he had been panting and plotting for some years); in 1771 Pery had the chance to translate his words into action, and when he was elected to the Speakership on Ponsonby's resignation bluntly declared that he was not going to go through the affectation of declining it, as it was 'the highest point of my ambition.' Here was consistency, and here also was extraordinary good luck; for although Pery's political career to date had exhibited all the qualities required of a Speaker in his day ('. . . . he exactly squares with the office . . . .'), the resignation of Ponsonby came as a complete surprise, Pery's candidature was a rushed job and Townshend might never have had and backed that particular hunch (in which case the opposition candidate

would almost certainly have won). It is one thing for a politician to exhibit all the right qualities for an office, and quite a different thing for them to be recognised on the day and in the rush.[79] Again, there seems to be a monumental consistency in Pery's line on Poynings's Law. In the published Emly Papers there are two letters from him on the subject, each to the head of the British government of the day, one written in 1757, the other in 1782, and both containing very similarly worded paragraphs about the powers of the Privy Council to amend Heads of Bills. Yet what is significant about this case of apparent consistency is that the paragraph in the letter of 1757 relates to the Irish Privy Council, and in the letter of 1782 to the British.[80] In the intervening years, circumstances had changed and Pery's personal situation had changed as dramatically. In 1782 he was able to state directly what he could not even have glanced at in a letter to a British minister in 1757.

Two other men of comparable stature were born at roughly the same time as Pery and shared his advantage, Hely Hutchinson and Flood. Hely Hutchinson was an exact contemporary, Flood nearly ten years younger. Their careers show what good use Pery made of the advantage; both ruined themselves politically, Hely Hutchinson by his insatiability, Flood by his instability. Obviously, not everybody born at roughly the same time as Pery found a Speaker's mace wrapped in his nappy. However, it is probably significant that neither Hely Hutchinson nor Flood was in parliament during the critical testing time of 1752-56. Pery was; and his experience of that storm in a teacup (comparatively speaking) equipped him to ride the real storm in 1779-82. Moreover, it is instructive to look at what happened to the next generation of first-rate men, the people born some twenty years after Pery: Fitzgibbon, Beresford, and Pery's successor as Speaker, Foster. The first two were extinguished by the Union, and the last struggled gallantly at Westminster, but against impossible odds. Grattan, younger still, was condemned to forty years of anticlimax after 1782 (partly his own fault for not taking office); and events altogether beyond his control, the French Revolution and the Revolutionary Wars, created a political climate in which he was vilified and misunderstood by both left and right, green and orange, and lost credibility in the eyes of both. Pery, by contrast, was lucky even in the timing of his death. His powers were undoubtedly failing him towards the end, and he made a mess of his will and of some of his last Limerick leases.[81] But politically he was still sharp and sage. Before the start of the 1799 session of parliament, when the Union was first introduced, it was at Pery's Dublin house that the anti-Unionists met to discuss tactics; and on this occasion the octogenarian Pery gave them good advice which the event proved they were silly to ignore.[82] The spectacle of the grand old man advising people three generations his junior on how to preserve the constitution over which he had presided and which he had helped to win, is a noble one indeed. Short of collapsing in the House of Lords, like the elder Pitt, he could not have sung a more poignant political swan-song. He was a master of timing, or time was on his side, until the end.

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NOTES

This article started life as a paper read to the Limerick branch of the Irish History Teachers' Association at their weekend conference on local history, 12-14 October 1973. In the published version, I have retained much of the informality of the original. I have also kept the same kind of audience in mind: people for whom Pery is familiar as a street name rather than as a political personality, and who may be interested in some general reflections on his place in Irish political history.

Assuming that foot-notes hold no terrors for those brought up on Lenihan, I have indulged in voluminous ones, partly to supply significant local detail, partly to give full quotations from my authorities and partly to discuss some specialist points. The foot-notes have been relegated to the end, as they are not necessary to an understanding of the text and would have overburdened it.

Among the abbreviations used in these notes are the following:

D.N.B. : *Dictionary of National Biography.*
H.M.C. : Historical Manuscripts Commission.
N.L.I. : National Library of Ireland.
N.R.A. : National Register of Archives.
P.R.O.N.I. : Public Record Office of Northern Ireland.

[1] G. E. Cockayne and others (ed.), *The Complete Peerage*, 13 vols., London 1910-40, X, pp. 495-496; entry under Pery of Newtown Pery.

[2] N.R.A. report on the papers of the Earl of Limerick, London 1961, *passim.*

[3] Earl of Limerick (Pery's nephew), Bracknell, Berkshire, to the Chief Secretary, Robert Peel, 23 October 1817, printed in Peter Jupp, *British and Irish Elections*, 1784-1831, Newton Abbot 1973, p. 176; Maurice Lenihan, *Limerick: Its History and Antiquities . . . .*, Dublin 1866, p. 417; Robert Herbert, *Worthies of Thomond*, 1st ser., Limerick 1944, pp. 47-49.

[4] Case of Rev. Stacpole Pery, Pery's father, concerning his right to sit and vote in the Limerick Common Council as the representative of the Prior of St. Mary's Abbey, with opinions of Samuel Bradstreet and John Fitzgibbon, 18 December 1735 and 13 July 1741 (Limerick Papers, N.L.I., bundle 15). At one point Rev. Stacpole Pery staged what would nowadays be called a 'sit-in' during a meeting of the Common Council, '. . . . and they told him that, if he petitioned for a seat, they would give it him, but not as his right. Then . . . . the Mayor, by vote of the Council, desired he would withdraw, upon which Mr. Pery sat down and said he would not withdraw unless he was compelled by force, for that he insisted he had a right to vote, or to that purpose; and the Mayor said he could not use a gentleman, especially one of his character, after such a manner. But Mr. Pery, finding them all [word illegible] and that they would not do any business, he addressed himself to the Mayor and said, since he was so tender of a gentleman, he would not lay him under any difficulty, and he and his witnesses left the room . . . .' (unsigned letter to 'Sir,' [*c.* December 1737]; *ibid.*, bundle 22).

[5] Lenihan, *Limerick*, p. 380. He was, however, sufficiently influential in the city to get himself elected to no less than ten of its guilds in 1741 (N.R.A. report on the Limerick Papers, p. 2).

[6] The poll book for this election (Limerick Papers, N.L.I., MS 16, 092) gives the result as follows: Pery, 758; Hugh Dillon Massy (who was unseated on petition), 410; Charles Smyth (Pery's brother-in-law), 378. Until the Union, each voter in Limerick and all the other Irish constituencies had two votes to cast at a general election; in 1761 all but twelve (the twelve including Pery himself) cast one of them for Pery; both Massy and Smyth voted for him; and Pery voted for Smyth. For Limerick city elections of the period, and for general background reading, see Cliodna Snoddy, 'Some Notes on Parliament and its Limerick Members, 1767-1771' in *N. Munster Antiq. J.*, 9 (1962-65), 165-182.

[7] John Prendergast Smyth (afterwards 1st Viscount Gort), Bath, to E. H. Pery, 13 December 1785 (Limerick Papers, N.L.I., bundle 8): 'I learned yesterday from our friend William Monsell the certainty of our late worthy Speaker's being called up to the House of Peers. You will of course offer yourself to represent the city of Limerick in his place, which I am persuaded you will do with

honour to yourself and advantage to your constituents. You may be assured of my warmest support and that of my friends, were it possible to suppose any opposition . . . .' Smyth himself had been unanimously elected earlier in the year at a bye-election occasioned by the death of his eldest brother, Thomas. Ever since a 'revolution' in the Common Council at the end of 1776, the Smyth family had established effective control over that body and consequently wielded the leading influence over parliamentary returns for Limerick—see John Ferrar, *The History of Limerick . . . . .*, Limerick 1787, pp. 91-92. Contrary to the testimony of Lenihan, the political alliance between the Smyths and the Perys did not survive the year 1794, when E. H. Pery in turn went to the House of Peers. During the succeeding canvass for his seat, there was such a spate of 'indecent' election literature that 'the delicacy of the Limerick ladies . . . . suffered considerably' and, from nearby Mount Shannon, Lord Chancellor Fitzgibbon felt himself impelled to use his influence to calm the storm. After a bye-election which nearly turned into a serious riot, the Pery candidate, Sir Henry Hartstonge, was defeated by the Smyth candidate, Col. Charles Vereker (Richard Jephson to Lord Charlemont, 29 September 1794, printed in *H.M.C., 12th Report, appendix, part X*, 1891, II, pp. 249-250; Fitzgibbon, Mount Shannon, to E. H. Pery, now 2nd Lord Glentworth, 29 July 1794 [Limerick Papers, N.L.I., bundle 22]; *Report from the Select Committee on the Limerick Election . . . .* 1820, printed in *Parliamentary Papers*, 1820 [229], III, pp. 283-353, especially 220-221). Between this bye-election and the Union, both the Smyths and the Perys angled for support among more popular elements in the constituency, but were content to divide the representation at the general election of 1797. The Union controversy, though it exacerbated their differences, did not, as Lenihan implies, create them. The important effect of the Union was to reduce the representation of Limerick from two seats to one (unlike Dublin and Cork, which each retained two). This meant that the Smyths, who except in 1794 had been prepared to compromise with the Perys or somebody else over the second seat, had no longer a second seat to play with. From the Union to the general election of 1820, the Smyths clung doggedly to the seat by fair means or (in the main) foul ones, and the Perys were left in uneasy and—what was worse—unavailing alliance with the popular elements. At the general election of 1820, Lord Limerick was at last successful in defeating the 2nd Viscount Gort's candidate, after the election petition referred to above. Thereafter, although disputes and litigation raged on (in 1823, for example, Lord Gort was complaining of '. . . the exhausted state of our corporate Treasury, occasioned by the unceasing attacks of a certain titled gentleman . . .'), Lord Limerick's control held firm until the Great Reform Act. See Lord Limerick to William Vesey FitzGerald, 18 July 1818 (Vesey FitzGerald Papers, N.L.I., MS 7854, p. 215); 1st Viscount Mountearl to Hon. Wyndham Quin, [1820], and 2nd Viscount Gort to Wyndham Quin, now Viscount Adare, 20 March 1823 (Dunraven Papers, Adare Manor, Adare, Co. Limerick).

[8] Henry Grattan junior, *Memoirs of the Life and Times of the Rt. Hon. Henry Grattan*, 5 vols. London 1839-46, I, p. 112.

[9] In 1790 Pery's younger brother, Rev. William Cecil Pery (Cecil was a family Christian name) was created Lord Glentworth of Mallow (*Complete Peerage*, V, p. 681; entry under Glentworth of Mallow).

[10] Earl of Clanbrassill, Dundalk, to Pery, 3 December 1785 (Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3052/204). Clanbrassill's subsidiary title was Viscount Limerick.

[11] Quoted in *Complete Peerage*, VII, p. 663; entry under Limerick. The difference of opinion between Pery and Lord Limerick is a good example of the kind of wedge which the Union drove between many relations and erstwhile political allies. On his side, Lord Limerick may well have been motivated by a desire to score off his rivals in Limerick city, the Smyths, who were strongly anti-Unionist. Such local rivalries, and local considerations of a less personal kind, were very important in shaping reaction to the Union. For example, it is possible that the Limerick Corporation (*i.e.* the Smyths) would have been as enthusiastic about it as Cork if Limerick, like Cork, had been scheduled to remain a double-member constituency at Westminster.

[12] 'Predictably' is the right adverb. A draft of a letter from the Lord Lieutenant to the Home Secretary in November 1799, to be found among the papers of the Chief Secretary, Viscount Castlereagh, gives the impression that Pery's opposition was not uncompromising; and this impression may have gained currency from the fact that the draft is quoted in both Lecky's *History* and the *D.N.B.* However, the Castle at this stage was prone to optimistic interpretations of people's sentiments. In any case, Castlereagh, writing to E. H. Pery, then 2nd Lord Glentworth, at about the same time—24 November 1798—observed: '. . . . Lord Pery seems more impressed with the objections to the measure than any of our statesmen here present [Dublin]. I have not yet conversed with him as fully as I could wish and shall do, as his ideas are always of the highest value and bear the appearance of the years he reckons . . . .' See Marquess of Londonderry (ed.),

Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh . . . ., 1st series, 4 vols., London 1848-9, II, pp. 18-19 and 25.

[13] Lenihan, *Limerick*, pp. 414-416 and 429-430. On the public level, the family tradition of advanced views on the Catholic Question had expressed itself in Speaker Pery's important contribution to the Relief Acts of 1778 and 1782 (E. H. Pery supported those of 1792 and 1793, but opposed full Catholic Emancipation in the latter year); on the private level, it had expressed itself in the extraordinary transaction recorded by Lenihan (*Limerick*, pp. 398-399) in which Rev. William Pery had acted as the nominal purchaser of some land in the new town, the real purchaser being his kinsman, Philip Roche (John) who, as a catholic, could not purchase land in his own name. (It is typical of the rich ironies in Irish history that a protestant clergyman should have made it possible for a catholic capitalist to evade one of the provisions of the Penal Code.) Lenihan, however, seems to have garbled the transaction somewhat. William Pery did not become Bishop of Limerick until 1784, and from 1782 onwards catholics could buy and lease land on exactly the same terms as protestants, except for land within a parliamentary borough; since Roche's land lay outside the municipal and parliamentary boundaries of Limerick city, he clearly cannot have needed William Pery's services at the time when William Pery was protestant bishop. Still, the irony is not much the poorer for that.

[14] *Complete Peerage*, VII, p. 664.

[15] Hon. H. R. Westenra to his father, Lord Rossmore, post-marked 6 February 1835 (Rossmore Papers, Keeper's House, Rossmore Park, Monaghan, /8/20). Lord Limerick lived for most of the time at South-hill Park, Bracknell, Berkshire, and by as early as 1865 the Pery mansion in Henry Street, Limerick (which still stands in much modified form today), had been converted to a warehouse (Lenihan, *Limerick*, p. 370). Towards the end of the nineteenth century the family tradition of absenteeism was reversed, when the 3rd Lord Limerick built Dromore, near Limerick, where he and his descendants resided on-and-off until the 1930s. I am indebted for this latter piece of information to Mr. Thomas Pierce, Adare, Co. Limerick.

[16] Sir Jonah Barrington, *Rise and Fall of the Irish Nation*, Dublin 1833, p. 191.

[17] Grattan, Tinnehinch, to Pery, 15 September [1785], printed in *The 14th Report of the Historic Manuscripts Commission, appendix, part IX*, 1895, p. 190.

[18] Francis Hardy, *Memoirs of the Political and Private Life of James Caulfield, Earl of Charlemont*, London 1810, pp. 80-83.

[19] Grattan, *Memoirs of Grattan*, vol. I, pp. 104-112.

[20] Quoted in W. J. Fitzpatrick, *Ireland Before the Union*, Dublin 1867(?), pp. 28-29 and 35. Fitzpatrick's quotations from an alleged diary of Lord Clonmell are so unblushingly frank and, at times, so inane, that one is left doubting the authenticity of the source.

[21] M. Bodkin (ed.), 'Notes on the Irish Parliament in 1773' in *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 48, C (1942), 202. For other instances of Pery's positive genius for taciturnity in difficult situations, see John Beresford, Dublin, to John Robinson, London, 18 November and 13 December 1779, printed in William Beresford (ed.), *The Correspondence of the Rt. Hon. John Beresford . . .*, 2 vols., London 1854, I, pp. 78 and 113-114.

[22] W. Hunt (ed.) *The Irish Parliament in* 1775, Dublin 1907, p. 43.

[23] Duke of Portland, Dublin Castle, to the Home Secretary, Thomas Townshend, 16 July 1782 (Sydney Papers, N.L.I., MS 51/a/1).

[24] *Freeman's Journal*, 21-24 September 1771, quoted in Eilish Ellis, 'The Third Parliament of George III, 1776-83' (unpublished M.A. thesis at U.C.D.), appendix, p. 213. I am indebted to Mrs. Ellis for this reference.

[25] Redesdale, Ely Place, to his brother-in-law, Spencer Perceval, 29 August 1803 (Redesdale Papers, Gloucestershire Record Office; photocopies in P.R.O.N.I., T.3030/7/8). This is only one of several highly unflattering contemporary comments on Lord Limerick. In 1802, for example, Judge Robert Day expressed exasperation '. . . . that such a mountebank as Lord Limerick should personify the Irish peerage in a strange land . . . .', although he had once praised Lord Limerick's 'powerful and impressive' manner of debating in the Irish House of Lords (Day to the Earl of Glandore, 13 March 1802 and 22 February 1798; Talbot-Crosbie Papers, N.L.I.). At the same time, judged by the volume of offices and honours which he amassed, his political career must be accounted a success, and he merits the backhanded compliments paid him by Barrington (quoted in *Complete Peerage*, VII, p. 663). Two letters from him to the British Prime Minister, written in October 1809, show the strength of the bargaining position he had established for himself in British politics—see *Eighteenth Century Irish Official Papers in Great Britain: Private Collections*,

Vol. One, H.M.S.O., Belfast 1973, p. 131. His position *vis-a-vis* the Irish government was less strong. In particular, the alarmist reports which he spread about the state of Co. Limerick in the winter of 1802-3 evoked much warmth from Dublin Castle, and provoked the Chief Secretary to write to the Prime Minister: '. . . . the reports you had heard from the county of Limerick . . . . are not worth your attention. We have the threads of everything that passes there and can trace the whole, or nearly the whole, to the remnant of a dissatisfied party, of which I am sorry to say Lord Limerick, who never comes to Ireland, is the head, or rather the dupe, and to individuals determined to force the government to put their yeomanry corps on permanent duty, *i.e.* on permanent pay.' (William Wickham, Phoenix Park, to Henry Addington, 18 December 1802; Wickham Papers, Hampshire Record Office; photocopies in P.R.O.N.I., T.2627/5/183). On the same occasion, John Prendergast Smyth came in for similar abuse; writing to the Chief Secretary on 10 January 1803, the Under-Secretary observed: '. . . . Mr. P. Smyth's letter . . . . adds to the Limerick wonders. Mr. S. is a respectable, elegant and amiable man, but his judgment, and particularly his nerves, I have no opinion of. He is the very man to be [thrown] into consternation by the idea of the town in which he resides being sacked: his china would be broken and his favourite ladies all—Lord knows what !' (Alexander Marsden to Wickham; *ibid.*, T.2627/5/742). Ironically, Lord Limerick and Mr. Smyth had the last laugh; the Irish government's low profile attitude to 'the Limerick wonders,' and its insistence that such representations were a case of crying wolf, left it unprepared when the real wolf came in the person of Robert Emmet in July 1803—see M. MacDonagh (ed.), *The Viceroy's Postbag*, London 1904, p. 302.

[26] Lenihan, *Limerick*, p. 397. Monsell was not a wholehearted anti-Unionist, as he vacated his purchased seat in favour of a Unionist after the session of 1799, receiving from the Unionist £1,500. See G. C. Bolton, *The Passing of the Irish Act of Union*, Oxford 1966, p. 68.

[27] Mrs. Warrenne Blake (ed.) *An Irish Beauty of the Regency, Compiled from . . . . the Unpublished Journals of the Hon. Mrs. Calvert* [Pery's daughter], London 1911, p. 62.

[28] *H.M.C., 8th Report, appendix, part II*, 1881, and *14th Report, appendix, part IX*, 1895—hereafter cited as *H.M.C. Emly*, I and II respectively.

[29] The collector who purchased the first volume is Mr. Walter Armytage of Halston, Moyvore, Co. Westmeath, and it has been photocopied by P.R.O.N.I. (reference, T. 3052). The calendar of this volume was published under the title *Additional Pery Papers*, Belfast 1973, but my introduction to that volume gives the probably erroneous impression that the 234 letters it contains were some of them 'new.' Subsequent to this, the Huntington Library went to considerable trouble (for which I am most grateful) to isolate and photocopy for P.R.O.N.I. the originals which either were or seemed to be missing from T.3052 (reference, T.3087). This collection has been calendared as follows: /1 consists of the 95 letters duplicated by the second volume of copies, then in the possession of Mrs. Trifine Turner, now deposited in the National Library; /2 consists of the 22 letters which exist only in the original, and are missing from the *H.M.C. Report* and both volumes of copies. It is hoped shortly to publish a revised *Additional Pery Papers* which will set the record straight and act as a supplement to the *H.M.C. Report*.

Mrs. Turner's papers contain one tantalisingly uninformative reference to how Pery's political papers came into the possession of the Monsell family; writing to the 1st Lord Emly at some time between 1874 and 1880 his second cousin, Harriet Thompson, expresses pleasure that 'you have secured some of my grandfather's [Pery] letters.' The 'some' may of course refer to a small adjunct, not to the Emly Papers as a whole.

In addition to the Emly Papers in the *H.M.C. Report* and in the Huntington, there are 'strays' elsewhere. The National Library possesses 9 letters from Burke to Pery (MS 5923, part), all of which have been published in T. W. Copeland and others (ed.), *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, 9 vols., Chicago/Cambridge 1958-70; Mrs Turner's papers include late 19th century copies of two further letters from Burke to Pery, which appear to be 'new' and probably no longer exist in the original; and Trinity College, Dublin, possesses Pery's draft or copy of his memorandum on the causes of Ireland's economic distress, [July 1779] (MS 543, part) which has been published along with the other memoranda on the subject in *The English Historical Review*, XXXVIII (October 1923) and XXXIX (January 1924).

[30] I am talking now of Emly Papers, not of the papers of other people, in which letters to and from Pery have turned up or may turn up. For example, the papers of Pery's friend, Robert FitzGerald, Knight of Kerry, contain six letters from Pery of which no copies exist in the Emly Papers, and the Liverpool Papers (papers of Charles Jenkinson, later 1st Earl of Liverpool) in the British Library contain thirteen letters to or from Pery, of which only four are in the Emly Papers. The papers of various Lords Lieutenant and Chief Secretaries who feature in the Emly Papers are

likely to yield similar or better results; for example, the papers of the 2nd Earl of Buckinghamshire in the Norfolk and Norwich Record Office (recently photocopied by P.R.O.N.I., and also the subject of a partial H.M.C. Report), and of Thomas Orde, 1st Lord Bolton, in the National Library. As for the two British Prime Ministers with whom Pery most frequently corresponded, Lord North's papers have not survived, and Lord Shelburne's (at Bowood, Calne, Wiltshire) are at present closed to inspection. Prospects are equally bleak for the papers of two less distinguished figures who were much more frequent correspondents of Pery, William Gerald Hamilton and the 1st Earl of Lucan; Hamilton's papers may survive, but they have never come to light, and the Lucan Papers are unlikely to contain much, if any, eighteenth century material.

[31] P.R.O.N.I., PRB 2161.

[32] Reference, D.2707. A detailed calendar of the Shannon Papers, incorporating the Shannon Papers in the National Library, is now approaching completion, and an edition of *Lord Shannon's Letters to his Son*, 1790-1802 will shortly be published by P.R.O.N.I. in association with the National Library.

[33] Petition of the Mayor, Sheriffs and Common Council of Limerick to the House of Lords, [*c.* December 1737?] (Limerick Papers, N.L.I., bundle 22).

[34] Lenihan, *Limerick*, p. 392. Writing as early as 1780, one traveller declared: Limerick '. . . . is one of the best-built towns for the size I ever saw, and far exceeds Cork in the elegance of the streets, houses and public buildings, though they do not carry on so great a trade as in Cork.' (Charles Perceval, Burton, Co. Cork, to Dr. Robert Perceval, 12 November 1780; Perceval Papers, P.R.O.N.I., D. 906/168). Thirty years earlier, John Hely Hutchinson had uncharitably said of Limerick: '. . . . your native dirt, my dear Mun, is one of the filthiest places that ever infected air.' (Hely Hutchinson to Pery, 3 September 1750; Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3087/2).

[35] These poll books, the first of which has already been referred to in note 6, are N.L.I. MSS 16092 and 3 respectively. Along with one or two items listed in the supplementary volume, which covers accessions to N.L.I. catalogued since the appearance of Dr. Hayes's *Manuscript Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation*, the two poll books have been abstracted from the rest of the Limerick Papers, which are as yet unsorted and are currently housed in packing-cases 875-9. I owe my familiarity with this unsorted part of the collection to the N.R.A. list of 1961 and to the helpfulness of Dr. Noel Kissane of N.L.I. Those interested in Limerick local history should note that there is another Limerick city poll book, relating to the bye-election of October 1731, in the British Library (Lenihan Papers, Add. MS 31888).

[36] See, for example, a letter from him to the owner of the bulk of the Wray estate, Lady Vere Bertie, dated Limerick, 7 June 1770 (Limerick Papers, N.L.I., bundle 8): '. . . . I am very sorry to inform your ladyship that the prospect for this country is very alarming: no demand for beef and but a very poor one for butter, the two chief commodities of this country [*sic*], and upon which entirely depends the value of the lands in the county of Limerick, and by both of which the farmers lost considerably last year. The few payments that are made are mostly in silver, which shows the scarcity of cash, and our credit is lower than ever I knew it. The farmers are every day surrendering their lands, and many farms have already fallen eight shillings an acre, and it is much to be feared will fall still lower. In short, if some happy event does not soon take place in favour of this wretched country, where the poor are all now perfectly starving, a general bankruptcy of all the landholders in this country is almost certain.'

[37] Duke of Portland, Dublin Castle, to Pery, 24 June 1782, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, II, p. 169.

[38] Pery, Dublin, to Lord North, 13 and 17 December 1779, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, I, pp. 206-7; Pery to Lord Shelburne, 6 and 23 May 1782, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, II, pp. 167-8. The editor of the H.M.C. Report queries whether the letter of 6 May 1782 is to Shelburne. However, the coincidence of 'Lord Dartrey,' mentioned at the beginning of that letter, and 'Lord [ ],' mentioned at the beginning of Shelburne's letter to Pery of 18 May (p. 168), seems to put the matter beyond dispute. Lord Dartrey's name is left blank in the P.R.O.N.I. copy of the letter of 18 May (T.3052/147).

[39] Substance of a conversation which passed between Pery and Lord Shelburne in London, 30 October 1782, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, II, p. 173.

[40] The question of his parliamentary jobbery on behalf of Newtown Pery is a difficult one. A Castle list of the 1768 parliament, already quoted, directly accuses him of it. Lenihan (*Limerick*, pp. 346-7) states that no less than £27,500 was voted by parliament, largely at Pery's instigation, for improvements in and around Limerick during the period 1755-61 (though very little of this was spent on Newtown Pery, and most of it on cutting a canal from Limerick to Rebogue and starting the cut from Rebogue to Killaloe). During the 1763-64 session, for which Sir James Caldwell's

anonymously published *Debates Relative to the Affairs of Ireland* . . . ., 2 vols., London 1766, are a unique source, there are various more or less veiled attacks on Pery's activities on behalf of Limerick. One member, replying to a speech of Pery's, referred satirically to the '. . . . gentle and innocent entertainment of tracing the meandering of canals and rivers, through meads and lawns, from one great city to another [Dublin and Limerick] . . . .'; another exclaimed that '. . . . A sum of £5,000 is demanded of us for one part of the Shannon [Limerick to Killaloe], and no less than £50,000 is said to be necessary to complete that undertaking, upon which we have expended £76,000 already . . . .' (in the end only £2,500 was granted); and a third, speaking generally but clearly referring to Pery, declaimed against men who '. . . . by a restless and talkative officiousness . . . . have wringled [*sic*] themselves to the head of a party, and affected to take the lead against encroachments upon public property attempted by others, only that they might encroach upon public property themselves. . . .'. These attacks must of course be taken in the context of the session. At the start of it, Pery had moved unsuccessfully that the House should vote no money to particular manufacturers (though not, be it noted, to particular *projects*), which obviously drew both attention and fire to his projects for Limerick. Again, throughout the session, he was the most persistent opponent of the government, particularly in the matter of pensions and the expense of the civil and military establishment, which again drew both attention and fire to the items of expenditure for which he was responsible. Since he was a marked man, in the eyes of people anxious for the promotion of their jobs or themselves, it is not surprising that he was attacked during the session covered by Caldwell's *Debates* (see especially pp. 129-144, 405-409, 420-425 and 598-603). Because the prosperity of his own estate was inseparable from the prosperity of Limerick City, the private and the public motives behind his jobbery were probably equally inseparable in his own thought processes. In 1768, for example, he wrote to a friend: 'Perhaps you can give me some information how I can effect . . . . a little job for myself: to get the barracks that are intended to be built at Limerick erected upon my ground, which is in truth almost the only spot there fit for the purpose.' (Pery, Richmond, to Robert FitzGerald, 23 November 1768; FitzGerald Papers, 2/17, in the possession of Mr. Adrian FitzGerald, 16 Clareville St., London S.W.7).

[41] Dean Pery, Limerick, to Mrs. The. Clayton, 7 March 1780 (Limerick Papers, N.L.I., bundle 7). One thing which can certainly be said in favour of William Pery is that he had a very good sense of humour, which he did not mind employing against himself. A more striking instance occurs at the time of his second marriage, in 1792, when he was seventy-one. Writing to Pery on 24 September, he says: '. . . . I am determined to marry sometime in the course of next month, for I can no longer live alone and want a nurse to take care of me in my decline of life, and a proper person to manage my family. The lady you know. She is Mrs. Crump, to whom I have been strongly attached for many years, and whose fortune is much better than I could expect. She is past fifty years old, and therefore there is no danger of bringing me any children. I know her to be a very good woman, and I make no doubt of her being an affectionate and tender nurse and companion to me, which in truth is all the business I have of a wife. Her advanced age will not require much conjugal endearments, which I am nearly past the time of giving.' (Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3087/95).

[42] Bishop Pery to Pery, 23 November 1789 (Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3052/224).

[43] In 1759 he had been offered the Prime Serjeantcy, the third law office of the Crown, and declined it '. . . . from perhaps too scrupulous a nicety lest private interest should be suspected to be the motive of my action . . . .': actually from '. . . . an overstrained punctilio to an undeserved friendship . . . .' with the overbearing and erratic 1st Earl of Belvedere; Pery was associated politically with Belvedere at this time and Belvedere was in a sulk with Dublin Castle (Pery, Dublin, to Duke of Bedford [the Lord Lieutenant], 24 March 1759, and Bedford to Belvedere, 16 June 1759 [Bedford Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.2915/7/28 and /52—by permission of the Trustees of the Bedford Estates]; Richard Rigby [the Chief Secretary], London, to Francis Andrews, 31 March 1759, Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3087/16).

In June 1762, the Chief Secretary wrote to John Hely Hutchinson, then Prime Serjeant: '. . . . If Pery, you and I and a few more are of the same mind, I think we cannot easily fail.' And later in the year the same Chief Secretary summed up his relationship with Pery as follows: '. . . . . he not only is, but he ought to be, trusted. You are aware of his disinclination to enter into positive engagements, and I profess that I should choose to have the continuance of his friendship flow from the continuance of his good opinion; and it will be much more pleasing to have it arise from conviction than from compact.' (William Gerard Hamilton, Hampton Court, to Hely Hutchinson, 26 June and 9 August 1762, printed in *H.M.C., 12th Report, appendix, part IX*, 1891, pp. 232-5).

[44] At the same time, it should be remembered that William Pery's ecclesiastical career was

retarded by his strong preference, from business and no doubt electioneering motives, for staying in the Limerick area. Thus, it had suited him very well to be dean of Killaloe, from 1772 to 1780, and his brief promotion to the deanery of Derry, from 1780 to 1781, suited him not at all; so much so that he sought, and was refused, permission to be non-resident (Frederick Hervey, Earl-Bishop of Derry, Downhill, to Dean Pery, 9 March [1780]; Limerick Papers, N.L.I., bundle 8). The bishopric of Killala was less inconvenient for him; but he took it primarily with a view to exchanging it for the no more valuable bishopric of Limerick, whose incumbent was known to be in failing health at the time. Had Limerick been a promotion, he might never have got it, as the government made it a nearly unvarying principle not to place people in the dioceses where their estates and political interests lay. In the case of the diocese of Limerick, the government had ample grounds for caution; the founding father of the Limerick Smyths had been an early eighteenth century bishop of Limerick, and William Pery's non-politically minded successor reckoned that he could determine fifty votes, apparently in elections for both Limerick city and county (Bishop Barnard, Limerick, to his nephew, Capt. Andrew Barnard, 3 August 1797, printed in A. Powell [ed.], *Barnard Letters*, 1778-1824, London 1928, pp. 80-81). The government's, and the otherwise very worldly Earl Bishop's, observance of principle in the matter of ecclesiastical patronage, are further reminders that eighteenth century men and institutions were often not as corrupt as twentieth century historians imagine.

[45] MacNeill, *Titled Corruption: the Sordid Origins of Some Irish Peerages*, London 1894, p. 69.

[46] Earl of Portarlington to his wife, [early July] 1789, printed in Mrs. Godfrey Clark (ed.), *Gleanings from an Old Portfolio*, 3 vols., London 1895, II, pp. 143-144: '. . . . Pery is certainly to be made a peer, and gives two seats for it, which he has purchased of Lord Lucan for 400 [*sic*-4,000] guineas. . . . .' Also, Earl of Abercorn to Hon. Henry Pomeroy, 29 February 1790 (Abercorn Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.2541/I.K./11, p. 12).

[47] *Complete Peerage*, X, p. 496.

[48] *The Parliamentary Register, or History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Commons of Ireland*, 1781-97, 17 vols., Dublin 1782-1801, V, pp. 480-482.

[49] *Complete Peerage*, V, p. 681. It was not a precedent, as an archbishop of Dublin had much earlier been created Viscount Blessington, and an archbishop of Armagh more recently Baron Rokeby.

[50] *Journals of the House of Commons of the Kingdom of Ireland*, 1613-1800, 19 vols., Dublin 1796-1800, XI, p. 407.

[51] Pery to Thomas Orde, [the Chief Secretary], 27 May and 10 July 1785, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, II, pp. 185 and 187-188.

[52] Quoted in Malcomson, 'John Foster and the Speakership of the Irish House of Commons' in *Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 72, C (1972), 298. The letter from which this remark is quoted is the main source of information for the next paragraph, but see also p. 302 of the same article. In general, I have avoided covering over again in the present article the ground covered in the earlier one; so, in so far as they are relevant to each other, they should be read in conjunction.

[53] George Ponsonby to John Forbes, [18 August 1785] (Forbes Papers, N.L.I., MS 978).

[54] Orde, London, to Pery, 24 November 1785, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, II, pp. 190-191.

[55] Malcomson, *Foster and the Speakership*, pp. 278 and 295.

[56] Townshend to the Secretary of State for the Southern Department, Lord Shelburne, 13 November 1767 and 26 January 1768, and to Shelburne's successor, Lord Weymouth, [*c.* 15 November 1769], printed in J. Redington (ed.), *Calendar of Home Office Papers . . . . . 1766-9*, London 1879, pp. 205-206, 296 and 519.

[57] *Commons' Journals* (Ireland), VIII, p. 323; Thomas Allan, London, to [the Chief Secretary], Sir George Macartney, 7 and 12 December 1769 (Macartney Papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.572/3/7 and /9); Townshend to the Lord President of the Council, Lord Gower, 7 December 1769 (Townshend Papers, W. L. Clements Library, Ann Arbor, Michigan, letter-book 4). I am indebted for this last reference to Mr. Tom Bartlett, whose Ph.D. thesis on the Townshend administration is nearing completion and promises to revolutionise our thinking on this crucially important lord lieutenancy.

[58] Townshend to the next Secretary of State for the Southern Department, Lord Rochford, 6 and 11 March, printed in R.A. Roberts (ed.), *Calendar of Home Office Papers . . . . 1770-2*, London 1881, pp. 216-222. Pery's predecessor as Speaker, John Ponsonby, resigned over the address to the Lord Lieutenant, not over that to the King, on the ground that the House had no reason to thank a Lord Lieutenant who had protested against its proceedings and prorogued it unceremoniously.

[59] Burke to Charles O'Hara, 28 March 1771, (*Burke Correspondence*, II, pp. 206-207). Poynings's Law of 1497, as amended in 1556, gave the British Privy Council the power to amend legislation which had passed the Irish House of Commons, and also established the procedure that, before a new Irish parliament could meet, two token bills had first to be approved by the British Privy Council as reasons for its meeting. It was, however, convention or accident, not the strict letter of Poynings's Law, which led to the practice of making one of these two bills a Money Bill.

[60] Waite, who was one of the Under-Secretaries at the Castle, to Sir Robert Wilmot, who was in effect another Under-Secretary, but permanently stationed in London, 11 March 1771 (Wilmot Papers, Derby Borough Library). The Wilmot papers are a vast and only recently discovered treasure house of Irish official and not-so-official papers. Derby Borough Library has recently photocopied them for P.R.O.N.I. (T.3019), by kind permission of their owner, Mr. D. W. H. Neilson of Catton Hall, Derby. The Waite-Wilmot correspondence contributes most of the not-so-official element, and is the most important part of the collection. Waite was a hardened, cynical and acute backroom boy, who was in no doubt about who really ran Ireland, and wrote with perfect freedom to Wilmot, his opposite number in all these respects. For this particular reference I am indebted, again, to Mr. Tom Bartlett.

[61] Townshend to the British Prime Minister, Lord North, 7 March 1771 (Townshend Papers, W. L. Clements Library, letter-book 2).

[62] Pery to Francis Andrews, Provost of Trinity, [15] May 1771 (Macartney Papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.562/2/61): 'As I am going to ride out, and shall not see you before the committee sits, let me tell you what I think the address ought to be: to thank him for his prudent and just administration, to express our satisfaction at his constant residence amongst us and our full persuasion that he will make the most favourable and just representation of our conduct to His Majesty. I think there should not be the least glance at anything that is past; it cannot answer any good end, and will disgust many friends.' Of the propriety of such advice Provost Andrews, an unvarying supporter of the government, needed no convincing. Indeed, it had been he more than anyone else who had acted as the intermediary between Pery and Townshend in March 1771, and he may have gone guarantor for Pery's good behaviour if elected. In these circumstances it is not surprising that Andrews should have passed the letter to Macartney, the Chief Secretary.

[63] *Commons' Journals* (Ireland), XVI, pp. 224-225.

[64] *Ibid.*, IX, p. 74.

[65] Bodkin, *Irish Parliament in 1773*, p. 202. The Castle scribe who drew up this list makes the surely fantastic charge that Pery's object in this (unsuccessful) move was to produce a deadlock between the two Houses, precipitate a dissolution and a general election, bring about the recall of the then Lord Lieutenant and secure his own re-election to the Speakership. 'It was a masterpiece of policy and design . . . .'—and so it certainly was if it was intended to encompass all these ends at one stroke! The comment is, however, a reflection of Pery's contemporary reputation for deepness and duplicity. What the real motive behind his speech was, is not clear, although it is likely that he was aiming at bigger game than the Irish House of Lords, an unenterprising body which had never even attempted to tamper with Money Bills: in particular, that he was aiming at the British Privy Council. The bill which he endeavoured to define as a Money Bill was a bill amending the Tontine Act passed earlier in the same session, the amendment being designed to make it easier for English capital to participate in the Irish tontine. The original Tontine Act had had a stormy passage. It had begun in the Irish House of Commons, but was then so considerably amended by the British Privy Council, along with another Money Bill, that the Irish House of Commons threw them both out and re-introduced them (in the case of the Tontine Bill, embodying all but nine of the Privy Council's seventy amendments). Commenting on this reverse, the Lord Lieutenant pointed out in an official dispatch: 'Although I can entertain no doubt of the power of altering Money Bills in England, provided the tax is not altered, yet three instances only can be found where any alterations, except of some few words in point of form and accuracy, have been made in Money Bills, and in two of them the bills have been rejected.' It is clear that Pery warmly espoused the House of Commons' view that the Privy Council had no power to amend Money Bills, even when its amendments did not alter the level of the tax. The Tontine Bill, as re-introduced into the House of Commons passed the Privy Council without significant amendment, and became law. The bill to amend it also began in the House of Commons, although from the government side, not the opposition. It was probably unpopular as limiting still further the already limited outlets for Irish capital, but the main ground of opposition to it was, again, the technical and constitutional ground that any bill pertaining to money was a Money Bill and should be treated procedurally as such. Certainly, by the time Pery made his speech, this was the only remaining point of dispute,

as the amending bill had already passed the Privy Council and both Houses, and the only question was the form in which it should receive the royal assent. Pery argued vehemently that it was a Money Bill, not a bill of regulation only, and should receive assent as a Money Bill; but he was out-voted. If the Castle scribe exaggerated the complexity of Pery's motives, he probably did not exaggerate the importance of the issue at stake; reporting the outcome of the debate to the Secretary of State in London, the Lord Lieutenant declared: '. . . . Your Lordship will more easily conceive than I can express the confusion and embarrassment which would have ensued to H.M.'s affairs in this kingdom if this most important question had not been thus defeated . . . .' The by-no-means conclusive evidence on which this reconstruction of events is based is: Lord Harcourt, the Lord Lieutenant, to Lord Rochford, the Secretary of State, 30 December 1773 and 6 March 1774, and Lord Rochford to Lord Harcourt, 14 January 1774, printed in Roberts (ed.), *Calendar of Home Office Papers . . . . 1773-5*, London 1899, pp. 121-123, 189-190 and 169; Francis Andrews, Nice, to Pery, 6 April 1774, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, I, p. 195; W. G. Hamilton to Pery, 12 January [1774] (Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3052/33); *Commons' Journals* (Ireland), IX, pp. 74-75, 81, 90-93, 108-111 and 115-116; and 13 and 14 George III, cap. 7, sec. 1. The episode cannot be passed over in any serious study of Pery and has been examined at such great length, partly because of the prominence given it by the Castle scribe, and partly because it is referred to, without elucidation and on the same authority, in the *D.N.B.* The *D.N.B.* entry under Pery is indicative of the scant justice which even the most significant Irish figure can expect at English hands.

[66] Lord Harcourt, St. Woolstan's, to Pery, 5 May 1776, and Lord Harcourt, Dublin Castle, to Sir Archibald Acheson, 29 May 1776 (Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3087/87, and Gosford Papers, P.R.O.N.I., D. 1606/1/85). To Acheson, Harcourt wrote: 'Don't be surprised to hear that you are chose for Enniskillen. Lord Mountflorence had kept a seat there for a person on whom I thought I could depend, but he disappointed us; and we should have been greatly distressed in point of time, for we were drove to the last moment, if I had not ventured to ask Lord Mountflorence to choose you, which may be of consequence to Mr. Pery. Agar has caused himself to be returned for Gowran, and one of the other peers for another borough, merely with a view of securing the chair; and as it can only make the difference of a very few days with regard to the peerage, I am persuaded you will excuse the liberty that has been taken.' In the end the votes of the three peers-apparent were not needed, as Pery had a majority of 43.

[67] [Lord] C[lermont] to Pery, 30 June 1774 (Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3087/54). Pery's intermediaries with the British government at this critical time were, in descending order of importance, Lord George Germain (formerly Sackville), Secretary of State for the American Colonies; Welbore Ellis, Joint Vice-Treasurer for Ireland; W. G. Hamilton, Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer; Lord Townshend, Master-General of the Ordnance; and Whitshed Keene, a member of the Board of Trade (see T.3087/61-87 and T.3052/43). These were influential figures and they seem to have been very active on Pery's behalf.

[68] Charles Agar, Archbishop of Cashel, London, to Pery, 8 November 1780, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, II, pp. 160-161. In this letter, Agar pretends that he has not yet seen any British minister, but it is pretty plain that he has and is only saying what he has been told to say. He was a curious choice as an intermediary, as he was no particular friend or admirer of Pery's and was an upholder of Poynings's Law and virtually everything else, the modification or repeal of which provided the Constitution of 1782. In a 'most private' letter to Macartney, the former Chief Secretary, written from Dublin while Pery was in London, in March 1780, Agar had had this to say: '. . . . You have probably seen the Speaker [Pery] and conversed with him. He is a strong advocate for the modification of Poynings's Law, the repeal of all English laws affecting this country, except the Declaratory Act [of 1720], and he would have that sleep quietly and unnoticed in the statute book. Now is not this a strange idea for so sensible a man to entertain ? Or is it not rather more strange that he should suppose he could prevail on an English administration to adopt it ? For can any man of sense suppose seriously that, if all other English Acts were repealed, we should not be as clamorous in another session for the repeal of the Declaratory Act as we now are for the repeal of that and many more ? He is certainly an able man, but he is not infallible, even in politics. It is a received opinion here that he has always been an enemy to every interference of the British legislature with respect to this country. Surely this would be too general an exclusion, for there may be occasions which may warrant—nay require—such interposition ? . . . . What his advice may be, I know not. But this I am sure of, that if the Judges' Bill [changing the tenure of the Irish judges to good behaviour] be sent back to us, justice will be worse administered here (if that be possible) than it is at present, and English laws become a dead letter from that moment; and should appeals cease to be carried from our courts of law and equity to England, Irish property will soon become a very

precarious tenure. I hope there are no advocates for such measures; and if there be, I hope there are good sense and firmness enough remaining to resist such attempts.' (Agar to Macartney, 26 March [1780]; Macartney Papers, P.R.O.N.I., D.572/7/53). These remarks have been quoted in full because they show how far to the left Pery was of everyone else influential at the Castle in the spring of 1780. Moreover, he was probably farther to the left than Agar realised. It is unlikely that he seriously believed that the repeal of the Declaratory Act would not follow the repeal of the other English Acts binding Ireland, or that he would not have welcomed that logical development. Also, it is likely that he was, at least privately, an advocate of the restoration of the supreme appellate jurisdiction for Ireland to the Irish House of Lords; significantly, in the very changed circumstances of early May 1782, he urged this on the British government as a matter of right, essential to the efficient administration of justice in Ireland, while he urged the repeal of the Declaratory Act largely as a matter of expediency, indeed necessity (Pery to Shelburne, 6 May 1782, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, II, pp. 166-7). He had been an advocate of the modification of Poynings's Law and the change in the tenure of the Irish judges for many years prior to 1780.

[69] To adapt a telling sentence quoted in note 43.

[70] Lord Buckingham, [the Lord Lieutenant], Dublin Castle, to his brother, W. W. Grenville, [the Chief Secretary], 21 December 1782, printed in *H.M.C. 13th Report, appendix, part III* 1892, I, p. 172.

[71] Hardy, *Charlemont*, p. 83. In 1768 he was still referred to as one of 'the independent gentlemen' in parliament (Townshend to Shelburne, 5 March 1768, printed in *Calendar of Home Office Papers . . . . 1766-9*, p. 313). Here again, there is an interesting contrast between Pery and his nephew, Lord Limerick, who was decidedly a party man. Applying in 1810 for a U.K. peerage, Lord Limerick was able to make the doubtful boast: '. . . . In all the changes for the last ten years, I have uniformly acted to the best of my powers in support of the party now in administration; when they were out of office I was equally attached to them as when they were in.' (Lord Limerick, London, to the Lord Chancellor, Lord Eldon, 21 January 1810; Liverpool Papers, B.L., Add. MS 38243, ff. 185-187).

[72] W. G. Hamilton to Pery, [pre 11 October 1763] (Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3052/6). Pery did not oppose that address, but he did oppose a subsequent address referring to the peace (Caldwell, *Debates*, pp. 618-623). His personal friendship with Hamilton was well-known to his Limerick constituents and increased his standing in their eyes (Daniel Hayes to John O'Donnell, Liberty Hall, Limerick, 6 April 1762, printed in Lenihan, *Limerick*, pp. 351-352); it also contributed to his ability to advance the prosperity of the city (Hamilton, Hampton Court, to Pery, 16 August 1762, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, I, p. 189). Interestingly, Hamilton was a devotee of the then celebrated Limerick gloves (Hamilton to Pery, 14 September 1770; Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3052/10). See also *N. Munster Antiq. J.*, 10 (1966-67), 78.

[73] I am indebted for this general point to Mr. Declan O'Donovan, who is completing a thesis at U.C.D. on the political crisis of the mid-1750s.

[74] Letter (actually a pamphlet) from Pery to Duke of Bedford, [*c.* 1756-57], printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, I, pp. 175-181. The fact that Pery was teller for the ayes in the Money Bill division of 17 December 1753 is recorded in the division list printed in Grattan, *Memoirs of Grattan*, I, pp. 325-331. *The Commons' Journals* do not give the tellers' names, though they record that Pery had been the teller for the government side in two crucial divisions a little earlier (V, pp. 196, 201 and 204).

[75] One of his contemporary detractors was also inspired to nautical metaphor by this episode in his career: '. . . . Your entrance into the school of politics was under the . . . . late Primate . . . ., and for a while you served your patron with zeal and fidelity. The wind soon shifted, you as quickly tacked and crowded all your sail on the bosom of popularity; since when, every wind that has arisen has seen your sails expanded to receive it, steady to no point . . . .' (*Freeman's Journal*, 21-24 September 1774, quoted in Ellis, 'Third parliament of George III,' p. 212). In October 1755, Stone formally disassociated himself from Pery, because he was anxious that the British government should not blame him for the opposition motions which Pery was then proposing (J. L. McCracken, 'The Undertakers in Ireland and Their Relations with the Lords Lieutenant, 1724-71,' unpublished M.A. thesis at Q.U.B., pp. 211-212). That was the end of their political, and probably their personal, relationship, although Lord Belvedere, the improbable patron to whom Pery transferred his allegiance, referred to Stone in a letter to Pery as 'our friend, the Primate' (Belvedere, Belvedere, Co. Westmeath, to Pery, 15 [December] 1756; Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3087/12). When Pery heard of Stone's death in December 1764, he commented cruelly: 'The Primate and Lord Shannon [Stone's great antagonist in the mid-1750s] are both dead; neither had the satisfaction to hear of the other's departure, which it is thought both wished.' (Pery to Robert FitzGerald,

31 January 1765; FitzGerald Papers, /I/87, printed in M.A. Hickson [ed.], *Selections from Old Kerry Records*, 2nd series, London 1874, p. 279). Interestingly, Pery remained on close terms with the Duke of Dorset's son and Chief Secretary, Lord George Sackville, for the rest of his life.

[76] Townshend, London, to Pery, 25 March 1778, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, I, p. 195.

[77] Some of Pery's office-holding and office-loving friends had foretold in the days of his 'patriotism' that he would end up in office. Lord George Sackville had written in 1758: '. . . . You cannot, with the turn you have for public business, avoid some time or other taking a lead in it as a servant of the Crown . . . .'; and Richard Rigby, like Sackville an ex-Chief Secretary for Ireland, had written in 1764: '. . . . I verily believe some few men out of employment may mean the service of their country—for instance, I believe you are a very honest man. But I think they mistake the mode of doing it. . . .' (Sackville, London, to Pery, 24 March 1758, and Rigby, Mistley, Essex, to Pery, 25 March 1764; Emly Papers, P.R.O.N.I., T.3087/15 and /32). Both Sackville and Rigby were Englishmen: the sententious and doctrinaire Lord Charlemont, an Irishman, expressed the opposite view. Writing in April 1775 to dissuade his friend, Flood, from taking office, he cited as a recent deterrent '. . . . a person undoubtedly well-inclined, and whose station, if in this country any could be ministerial, ought certainly to be considered as such . . . .': clearly a reference to Pery. '. . . . I declare it' Charlemont pontificated 'as my firm and fixed opinion that, whatever may be the case in England, it is utterly impossible that office in Ireland can confer the power of doing good. . . . . it may be said that, though political power be not absolutely conferred by office, yet as a confidential approach to the Minister is naturally obtained by it, there will be an opportunity for the salutary operation of good advice, and noxious measures may by this means be so tempered as to be rendered less hurtful or possibly innocent. In speculation this may appear plausible, but I am sorry to say that facts and experience uniformly declare against it. No good man will ever be the favoured agent of an Irish viceroy. . . . . Let us for a moment suppose a Sidney, a Hampden, a Flood in office. Their intentions will no doubt still continue unaltered, but will their judgments remain unwarped ? Unknown to themselves, their sentiments, their opinions, will change; they will view objects through a different medium, and instead of looking at all court measures with suspicion, as every patriot ought to do, they will see them in their most advantageous light; instead of searching for latent mischief, they will labour to discover some barely possible good. . . .' (Charlemont, Dublin, to Flood, 13 April 1775; Flood Papers, B.L., Add MS 22930, ff. 51-4, printed in *Original Letters . . . . to the Rt. Hon. Henry Flood*, London 1820, pp. 70-77). So much—at least according to Charlemont—for Pery's 'political chemistry.'

[78] The most extreme example of a disposition to attribute a spirit of divination to Pery is Grattan junior's claim that Ireland owed to Pery the arming of the Volunteers, and consequently her liberty. It is true that Pery was one of many people who urged that the militia arms should be distributed among the Volunteers, and that a letter he wrote to Lord North on the subject, earlier in the month—July 1779—when they were at last distributed, may have influenced that decision. However, it is far-fetched to imagine that such a decision was the work of any one individual, or that the decisive factor was not the invasion scare of that critical summer. It is also far-fetched to imagine that Pery, in the midst of this invasion scare and of a rapidly changing political situation, had much inkling that the arms would later be used to give teeth, in this case dragon's teeth, to the Volunteers' subsequent political demands. Besides, in his letter to Lord North, Pery urged that the Volunteers be armed 'under His Majesty's authority.' This suggests one of two things: either that Pery was using studiously vague language to flatter North's hopes that the Volunteer officers would be prepared to accept commissions from the Crown; or, more probably, that he was a sincere advocate of the scheme then being widely canvassed that the militia arms should be used as a carrot to induce them to accept such commissions. This scheme proved abortive, and numbered among its advocates, not men of long political sight, but highly placed dullards such as the Duke of Leinster and Thomas Conolly of Castletown, Co. Kildare. Had it come off, the Volunteers would in large measure have been deprived of their subsequent effectiveness as a political force and, in Grattan junior's terminology, Ireland would never have gained her liberty. See Grattan, *Memoirs of Grattan*, I, p. 107; Pery, Dublin, to Lord North, 14 July 1779, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, I, p. 201. In considering this question, I have profited much from conversation with Dr. D. H. Smyth, who has recently concluded a Ph.D. thesis entitled 'The Volunteer Movement in Ulster: Background and Development, 1745-85,' Q.U.B. 1974.

[79] Letter, supposedly from an Armenian to his friends at Trebizond, [1756], printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, I, pp. 174-175; *Commons' Journals* (Ireland) VIII, pp. 370-371. For evidence of the rush and the strong possibility that Townshend would have backed another candidate, John Beresford, see Waite to Wilmot, 4 and 6 March 1771 (Wilmot Papers, Derby Borough Library; I am indebted

for these references to Mr. Tom Bartlett). Beresford had been widely tipped as the government candidate for the Speakership since 1767, and the names of two highly independent country gentlemen, Thomas Conolly and William Brownlow of Lurgan, Co. Armagh, had acquired similar currency. In the event, Townshend opted for Pery as much because of Beresford's demerits (in Townshend's eyes) as because of Pery's merits. See Charlemont, London, to Flood, 9 April 1767 (Flood Papers, B.L., Add. MS 22930, ff. 19-21, printed in *Flood Letters*, pp. 36-41), [Maurice Coppinger ?], Dublin, to Robert FitzGerald, 13 January 1767 (FitzGerald Papers, 2/24), and Townshend to Beresford's brother, the 2nd Earl of Tyrone, [early March] 1771 (*Beresford Correspondence*, I, pp. 2-3). Pery's majority was only 118: 114—a tiny majority by any standards, and a very large division by the standards of the Irish House of Commons.

[80] Pery to William Pitt the Elder, 20 December 1757, and to Shelburne, 6 May 1782, printed in *H.M.C. Emly*, I, p. 182, and II, pp. 166-167.

[81] Blake, *Irish Beauty of the Regency*, p. 61; Hon. Thomas Knox, one of Pery's sons-in-law, to Pryce Peacock, the Pery agent, Limerick, 13 March 1806 (Limerick Papers, N.L.I., bundle 8).

[82] Lord Castlereagh, Dublin Castle, to the Home Secretary, the Duke of Portland, 21 January 1799, printed in *Castlereagh Correspondence*, II, p. 126: '. . . . the opposition . . . . had yesterday a meeting at Lord Pery's. His Lordship's advice was not to fight, or divide on, the address, but to wait for a more specific proposition. This opinion was not relished by the younger members, who were for starting from the post . . . .'

PLATE VI

Pastel portrait of Speaker Pery, painted at some time in the 1790s by Hugh Douglas Hamilton.