

The Dean and That Paper

O decano e aquele jornal

Edward Walsh

Abstract: *Patrick Edward Joseph Dillon (1841-1889), more commonly known as Dean Dillon, was a significant, albeit controversial, figure in the history of the Irish in South America. Despite being known for a severe and unsympathetic behaviour, which was much criticised, Dean Dillon left a legacy of undeniable importance through his work as a Catholic priest and missionary, mostly in Argentina. The chapter is titled after its specific focus on the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the founding of one of Dillon's most ambitious projects: The Southern Cross, an English-language catholic paper focused on the Irish Argentines. Through letters, the chapter covers Dillon's initial career, his involvement with the Irish Catholic population in Argentina and the upbringing of what would become the TSC as it is known today.*

Keywords: The Southern Cross; Dean Dillon; Irish in Argentina.

Resumo: *Patrick Edward Joseph Dillon (1841-1889), mais conhecido como Dean Dillon, foi uma figura importante, embora controversa, na história dos irlandeses na América do Sul. Apesar de ser conhecido por seu comportamento severo e pela falta de empatia, pelos quais foi muito criticado, Dean Dillon deixou um legado de inegável importância por meio de seu trabalho como padre católico e missionário, principalmente na Argentina. Este capítulo tem como título uma homenagem à celebração do 150º aniversário da fundação de um dos projetos mais ambiciosos de Dillon: o The Southern Cross, um jornal católico em inglês voltado aos irlandeses-argentinos. Por meio de cartas, o capítulo aborda o início da carreira de Dillon, seu envolvimento com a população católica irlandesa na Argentina e a formação do que viria a se tornar o TSC.*

Palavras-Chave: The Southern Cross; Dean Dillon; Irlandeses na Argentina.

Patrick Edward Joseph Dillon (1841-1889) better known as Dean Dillon was a formidable and controversial individual who while highly respected was far from universally loved by his countrymen. Shortly after ordination at All Hallows College, Dublin in 1863 for the diocese of Buenos Aires, Dillon arrived in Argentina and was appointed curate at Merlo. In 1865 at the behest of Fr Fahy he visited the Falkland Islands.

Undoubtedly talented, his behaviour and lack of empathy drew a sharp and stinging critique from Evangelist Fitzpatrick in a 1877 letter to the archbishop of Dublin, Paul Cullen. She noted that Dillon had greatly improved since his arrival in Argentina, but “he is not generally liked, but all must acknowledge he is peaceable and charitable. He does, I think, all the good that, with his disposition he possible can.”¹ Dillon’s comings and goings to Rome in 1869 and subsequently on behalf of the national government in 1881 were all noted in the Editor’s Table column of *The Standard*. He was seen in the most laudatory terms as evidenced by the English language newspaper *The Standard & River Plate News*. Today, Dillon is best remembered as the founder of *The Southern Cross* newspaper rather than for any other of his achievements.

When the first edition of Dillon’s paper appeared the Mulhalls were quick to acknowledge. “The first of our new English colleagues, the Southern Cross appeared on last Saturday. The paper is neatly printed, and of convenient size. Mr William T. Cartcart, formerly of the Daily News takes charge of the advertising department. The opening leader “The Land We Live In” is a friendly shake hands with all of us. We congratulate the Reverend Editor, Canon Dillon, on his first step forward, and invite his Reverence to a comfortable seat in the “bus.”² But it was far from being an easy ride.

1.

[The Standard, Saturday 27 February 1869]

Editor’s Table. We have most sincerely to congratulate our talented countryman the Reverend Patrick Dillon on obtaining the Canon’s chair now so long vacant at the Cathedral. The theological exam passed by the reverend gentleman on Wednesday last was of the most searching description, and his answering of the grave and intricate questions proposed, was quite in accordance with his previous reputation for learning and erudition. We only regret that he had no competitors, for we feel perfectly convinced that in such a case the result would have been the same.

2.

[The Standard, Sunday 7 March 1869]

Editor's Table. Yesterday morning the Archbishop, all the canons and a select congregation attended at the Cathedral to hear the Reverend Mr Patrick Dillon preach in Spanish a competitive sermon. The occasion was particularly interesting. The young clergyman sought the vacant canon's chair an ecclesiastical dignity of great importance. He had passed all the preliminary requirements, such as a theological discussion in Latin etc. and now to win the palm it was only necessary for him to preach in the Cathedral a sermon in Spanish the Archbishop giving the text. That so young a man, a foreigner speaking a different language only a few years in the country, and according to all precedents, no matter what his talents, his very youth almost disqualified him, should step from the ranks and claim so high a position naturally caused in ecclesiastical circles much surprise. The Cathedral was crowded, and, without exaggeration, we may say that never since that church was built was there a better sermon preached within its walls/ The Archbishop and the Canons were taken by surprise at the eloquence and oratorical fire of the young Irish clergyman who delivered himself in Spanish with the most faultless eloquence and the most unexceptional pronunciation. We salute our gifted fellow countryman on his victory, and hope that Providence will spare him to achieve the bright tole to which his shining talents entitle him.

3.

[The Standard, Saturday 13 March 1869]

Editor's Table. We publish today the decree of Government appointing Very Reverend Canon Patrick Dillon to the Cathedral Chair of Theology and we take the opportunity of renewing to him our congratulations of the event.

OFFICIAL DECREE

March 8th 1869

To His Excellency the Minister of Justice, Worship and Public Instruction Dr D. Nicolás Avellaneda. It is very satisfactory to me to be able to inform the Government through Your Excellency that the Reverend Patrick Dillon, only competitor, having passed the literary examination, and having been unanimously approved of by the Venerable Dean and Chapter over which I preside it now becomes necessary to install him in that chair to which he has

acquired a right by the proofs he has given of his capacity, and the services he has rendered to the Church.³

Although born and educated in Ireland he was destined to come here and exercise his sacred calling in favour of his fellow countrymen, for this reason he was ordained specially for this archdiocese and since his arrival he has been stationed as a curate in the town of Merlo, where he has rendered great services not only to his own countrymen but to ours, for in a very short time he acquired a perfect knowledge of the Spanish tongue . Some time ago in consequence of his abilities he was transferred to the Colegio Seminario where [he] most successfully filled the Professorship of Dogmatic and Moral Theology, and Holy Scriptures, distinguishing himself at the same time by his exemplary conduct and devotion to his sacred calling.

For all these reasons he is entitled to the canon's chair, which he has successfully carried out and I feel honored in informing the Government of this through Your Excellency in order that the necessary steps may be taken.

God preserve Y. E. many years

MARIANO JOSE

Archbishop of Buenos Aires⁴

DECREE

B. Ayres, March 10, 1869

Having seen by the note preceding that the Revd. Patrick Dillon sole competitor for the canon's chair of Theology, has been unanimously approved by the Chapter, and passed the necessary examination, and it being proper that the numerous Irish population amongst us should have a representative in the Chapter of the Metropolitan Church. The President of the Republic decrees-

Art.1 That the Revd. Don Patricio Dillon, be named Theological canon in the Chapter of the Metropolitan Church.

Art.2 Let this be communicated to those interested, published, and entered in the National Register.

SARMIENTO⁵

N. Avellaneda⁶

4.

A Protestant to Standard Editors
[The Standard, Sunday 14 March 1869]
The Rev. Mr Dillon
Buenos Aires March 12, 1869
To the Editors of The Standard

Gentlemen,

The dignity conferred on the Rev. Mr Dillon by the Archbishop and the Chapter of the Cathedral cannot fail to elicit the warm approval of yourselves and co-religionists, and to for, a subject for your favourable comment in the next issue of the Standard.

If so, I think you will be perfectly justified in stating that the nomination has given no less satisfaction to the Protestant members of the British community, by whom the reverend gentleman has been long and favourably known.

Yours etc.

Protestant

5.

[The Standard, Tuesday 23 March 1869]

Editor's Table. The official reception and installation of the Reverend Patrick Dillon as Canon of the Cathedral took place on Saturday in the presence of the Archbishop, Dean, and Chapter. The attendance at this interesting ceremony was not as numerous as it would have been had the weather proved finer.

6.

Dillon to Standard Editors⁷
10 April 1869
[The Standard, Sunday 11 April 1869]
Canon Dillon
To the Editors of The Standard
Ecclesiastical Seminary
April 10, 1869

Gentlemen,

As your journal has been the medium through which I have lately received a kind complement from my Protestant friends in Buenos Ayres, permit me to offer them, through the same channel, my most sincere thanks for an act of kindness which has filled me with the greatest satisfaction.

On account of the dignity to which I have been advanced, consequent to my promotion from the rank of the inferior to that of the higher clergy, I have lately been the object of many congratulations and complimentary comments in the native and foreign press: buy I assure you, gentlemen, that there has been no compliment paid to me of which I feel so proud, and which will have such a lasting place in my memory, and so strong a claim on my gratitude, as tat paid me by my Protestant friends in Buenos Ayres.

My Protestant friends here, I am happy, to say, are many, and I hope that although our respective occupations that in this busy life renders us from meeting one another with that frequency which I would wish our mutual relations may maintain cordial as ever.⁸

I have the honor to be, gentlemen
Yours very sincerely
P. Canon Dillon

7.

[The Standard, Friday 18 June 1869]

Editor's Table. Doctor Escalada, Archbishop of Buenos Aires leaves early September for Rome to attend the approaching Ecumenical Council to be accompanied by Reverend Canon Dillon.

8.

[The Standard, Sunday 25 July 1869]

Editor's Table. The Very Reverend Canon Fahy has dispatched to the country districts upwards of 500 copies of the Pope's letter to the Faithful on the occasion of the approaching Council in Rome.

9.

[The Standard, Tuesday 27 July 1869]

Editor's Table. It is now finally decided we believe that the Archbishop accompanied by Very Reverend Canon Dillon, will leave for Rome in the September packet.

10.

[The Standard, Sunday 17 October 1869]

Editor's Table. We are requested by Canon Dillon to publicly thank in the name of Dr Escalada, Archbishop of this city, the Captain and officers of the mail steamer Arno for the attention

paid to him and his suite on the passage to Rio. In Rio the Archbishop's party was received with much distinction during their short sojourn in that city.

11.

[The Standard, Friday 10 December 1869]

Editor's Table. Archbishop Escalada and Canon Dillon arrived in England in excellent health and after a few days stay proceeded 'en route' to the Eternal City.

12.

[The Standard, Sunday 12 December 1869]

Editor's Table. Dr Escalada together with Canon Dillon and the rest of the prelates suite were entertained with great distinction by Dr Manning, Archbishop of Westminster,⁹ during his stay in London.

13.

[The Standard, Saturday 18 December 1869]

Editor's Table. The first person the Archbishop of Buenos Aires met on landing at Southampton was no other than Don Juan Manuel Rosas the ex-dictator of this country who humbly asked for his Grace's blessing. On its being given, Rosas as a 'quid pro quo' handed Dr Escalada a small packet which was supposed to contain papers of great importance respecting the Cathedral of Buenos Aires.

14.

Dillon to Standard Editors

1 October 1874

[The Standard, Friday 2 October 1874]

The Irish Hospital

To the Editors of The Standard

Gentlemen,

I beg to thank most sincerely the B. A. Thespians for their generous donation (\$7,454) to the Irish Hospital. This institution, which is admirably managed by the Sisters of Mercy, has rendered during the last year, the most signal assistance, to Irish, English, Scotch and Americans, Catholics and Protestants.

The Thespians deserve well of their countrymen, for, while providing them with rational amusements, they have not been unmindful of the poor and sick.

May God grant them that reward which is the sure fruit of the prayers of the widow, the orphan and the destitute.

On behalf of the many poor who daily crown my house, I appeal to the charity of my fellow countrymen – I appeal to their generosity to assist me in relieving the immediate wants of many families now out of employment.

The good Sisters of Mercy clothe and feed thirty orphan children. How they manage to do is a mystery to me. I certainly hope that some pious and charitable persons will assist the poor Sisters in this trying time, when everything is so dear.

Poor people who require medicine will be supplied gratis by applying to me.

I am Gentlemen
Yours sincerely,
Patrick Canon Dillon

15.
Dillon to Tobias Kirby¹⁰
14 November 1875

[PICRA, Kirby Papers, Vol.5, 1872/1875, KIR/1874/655]

Buenos Aires,
1599 Calle Corrientes
14 November 1875¹¹

My Dear Monsignor,

An English Catholic newspaper is a great necessity in this country. The press here is either infidel or indifferent. I hope to be able by the beginning of next year to publish an English Catholic paper. I wish to have a correspondent in Rome who will give our Irish people here a fair share of Italian politics + as much Catholic news as he can conveniently put into a small letter.

I wish to receive a letter every week. At present I can pay only a little, however after a little time I hope to be able to remunerate the Correspondent as he may deserve.

I know no one to whom I can apply with so much confidence as to you, for I have already experienced your kindness, during my stay in Rome. Will you then add this favour to the next + get me a faithful; and intelligent correspondent, who will write regularly. The sooner I receive a letter from him the better. Please let me know how I am to remit him his

“honorarios.”

The election of the President of this Republic took place last month, and the vanquished party has taken up arms so we are now in the full blaze of revolution. But it is probable that in a month every thing will be quiet again.

Excuse the trouble I give you + please at your earliest opportunity appoint the correspondent for me.

Believe me to be

My dear Monsignor

Patrick Canon Dillon

Chaplain of the Irish

That 1875 letter to Kirby is of particular interest. Although the first issue of The Southern Cross appeared in 16 January 1875 here was Dillon not only actively seeking a Roman correspondent but also boldly announcing his intention to publish an English language Catholic paper in the forthcoming year. Dillon’s plan to publish such a newspaper was an interesting ambition not least as TSC was de facto a catholic paper focused on the Irish Argentines. It is not known if Dillon ever received a reply from Kirby and whether a Rome correspondent was eventually appointed.

In those early years there was an easy relationship between Dillon and the Mulhalls as TSC (which published on Fridays) was printed on the Standard presses. This is what makes Frank Healy Mulhall’s 1879 letter is of particular interest as there is no mention of Frank’s editorship in TSC 1975 centenary number.¹² In his first editorial Dillon declared the new paper to be “liberal in politics, conservative in religion, respectful of the opinions of others and charitable to all.”

16.

Dillon to Standard Editors

25 July 1877

[The Standard Friday 27 July 1877]

Notice

Buenos Aires 25 July 1877.

Canon Dillon requests that subscribers be advised that The Southern Cross will henceforth be published at The Standard office, where they will please send any complaints for non-delivery.

17.

Dillon to Standard Editors

5 August 1877

[The Standard, Sunday 5 August 1877]

Plagued by ill health and having been confined in his residence for more than a month Dillon declared that he has been advised by his medical doctors to rest and so he is going to Paraguay for some time.

18.

Dillon to Standard Editors

12 October 1877

[The Standard Sunday 14 October 1877]

Notice

Canon Dillon “hereby notifies that he has this day sold half of his interest in The Southern Cross to Mr Francis H. Mulhall...”

19.

Editor’s Table, The Standard

Wednesday 14 October 1877

[The Standard, Wednesday 24 October 1877]

“We have much pleasure in saluting The Southern Cross under new management. V. Reverend Canon Dillon and Mr Francis H. Mulhall who have established their own printing house and office in Calle Corrientes...”

20.

Dillon to Standard Editor

25 November 1878

[The Standard, Tuesday 26 November 1878]

606 Santa Fe

Nov. 25, 1878

Mr Edward T. Mulhall, Editor of The Standard

My Dear Friend

Personal

A paragraph relative to the way in which The Standard was edited during your absence in Europe appeared in the last issue of The Standard. It appeared in the commercial columns of the paper and was published without my knowledge or consent, and caused me much

pain and annoyance. I now express my deep regret and sorrow that it was published, and my profound indignation at my paper being used as a medium to insult or injure any person. The statements contained in the paragraph I believe to be ungenerous and unmanly. As Editor of the paper I am responsible in the eyes of the public for what it contains, therefor I hasten to apologise to my friends, whose feelings have been wounded by the thoughtlessness of the commercial editor of the paper. It is painful for me to write on this matter, or even to think of it, but come what may, the reputation of The Southern Cross, as the accredited organ of the Irish Catholics of Buenos Ayres, must not be allowed to suffer.

Begging you to accept this apology, as well as the assurance of my highest esteem for yourself and your brother editor.

I remain dear friend

Yours faithfully and affectionately

Patrick J. E. Dillon

21.

Frank H. Mulhall¹³ to Standard Editors.

17 October 1879

[The Standard, Saturday 18 October 1879]

The retirement of Mr F. H. Mulhall from the editorship of The Southern Cross is announced in the subjoined notice, which aptly expresses our own appreciation of his very energetic efforts on behalf of that paper. In everything concerning the interests and welfare of the very wide community of which The Southern Cross is the organ, Mr F. H. Mulhall always displayed the greatest zeal, and as the active assistant of Dean Dillon in the editing and publishing of that paper, the Dean will find it difficult to get a better or more active coadjutor.

This week terminates our connection with The Southern Cross after a period of two years, during which we have endeavoured to work out that program of usefulness and reform for which the paper was published. Amongst other complaints we have heard it said there was not local news enough in the sheet. How could we compete with two daily journals, both active and enterprising, and were it not worse than bad taste to copy from either or make a 'cold hash' whilst more important events were daily passing in the Catholic world which no paper in this city cared to record? Here then, to our mind, was the mission of The Southern Cross, the champion of the true faith, the bond of unity between the old country and the new. That the requirements of religion or the necessities of our colony in the camp are sufficient

to demand publication of a special organ in their behalf admits of no dispute; that we have honestly helped to carry out the useful program we feel certain none can deny. Witness our victory over both National and Provincial Governments in the proposed sheep and cattle tax. The formation of the General Brown Club. The appointment of chaplains to the army. Freedom of elections for Justices of Peace and Municipalities through the camp. These are a few of the most important points on which we have triumphed, but the other on which we fought quite as hard with indifferent success would fill an entire column and be of little use to enumerate. Suffice it to say that the fight has been carried on all alone, without even an English printer most of the time. This may explain why greater things have not been achieved; enough, however, has been done to justify Canon Dillon in founding The Southern Cross, and in establishing his claim on the gratitude of his countrymen for a work in which we were his willing assistant.

Editor'

Despite what Frank Mulhall stated, a trawl through The Standard and TSC reveals that both papers quite liberally copied material from one another when it suited their purpose.

It is remarkable that Frank Mulhall's period as editor of TSC appears to have been airbrushed from the records. This correspondence is important in setting the record straight.¹⁴

22.

The Standard, Saturday 19 March 1881

Editor's Table. Dean Dillon will leave for Ireland early next month on an Immigration mission for the National and Provincial governments. As will be seen by an advertisement in another column, Mr Eastman, the well-known auctioneer, will sell the Dean's furniture by auction on Friday next, at his house on the Flores road. It is all new and in the most refined taste, and those on the look-out for handsome furniture should not fail to attend the sale.

23.

The Standard, Wednesday 13 April 1881

Editor's Table. Dean Monsignor Dillon will leave on Monday next for Montevideo to take the Pacific steamer for England; he will only be absent for six months, and leaves full powers to Mr Laurence Garrahan,¹⁵ to whom all his bank books, receipts etc. have been handed, and who will answer all demands, present claims etc. Dean Dillon has resigned his seat in the Provincial

Senate. His mission to old Ireland is one of the greatest moment to the Republic and the whole nation heartily wishes him God-speed.

24.

A. del Viso¹⁶ to Dillon

16 April 1881

[The Standard, Tuesday 19 April 1881]

Ministry of the Interior, B. Ayres

Del Viso advises Dillon that he is directed by presidential decree to go on a mission to Ireland to foment Irish emigration to Argentina acting together with Dr Carlos Calvo, the Argentine Commissary General in Europe.

25.

The Standard, Tuesday 19 April 1881

Editor's Table. The Venerable Dean Monsignor Dillon embarks today for Europe in the Hipparchus, and with him go the good wishes of Argentine and Irishmen, indeed of every nationality in this cosmopolitan country. We give in another column the decree in reference to his mission, which will be crowned with suitable for that purpose the very best proof of complete success.

Departure of Dean Dillon

The letter of instructions of the Minister of the Interior to our distinguished countryman, the Dean, which we give at foot, will thoroughly explain to our readers the nature and object of his mission and we think it due to the public to give this official document in order to remove the rather prevalent idea that the Government send the Dean to organise a large and wholesale Irish immigration to the Plate.

President Roca has invited Dean Dillon to make a trip to Ireland with a view to publish in the papers there something about this country, and give a few lectures on the Republic so that farmers and others who are in a position to elect as to the best country for emigration may have some opportunity of judging from so authentic a source of the relative merits of the Plate.

The mission of the Dean is a very high compliment which General Roca pays to Irishmen whose success in this country he considers the very best proof of their adaptability

to our climate and industry. At present owing to the delay of surveys etc. the Government is not in a position to apportion any territory for Irish emigration, but the President has sent a special engineer to Rio Negro to report to the Government the lands most suitable for that purpose and he hopes that by June next this engineer will return, and on that report, to obtain from Congress the lands best suited for the purpose.

In the vast human tide as that which steadily flows from Great Britain to the States, Canada and Australia, President Roca rightly thinks that there are hundreds of families with sufficient capital to pay their own passage to this country, and start in the camp, and it is to tell these people of the very great advantages of this country in climate, food, soil and production, has over all others, that the recent mission has been organised. Assisted passages and free homesteads will, in all probability, be voted by Congress and his trust extends no further than giving useful information about the Plate to those who care to avail themselves of it.

Spontaneous emigration is undoubtedly the best; the immigrant who pays his own passage and makes a start for himself in the country is incomparably superior to the immigrant brought out at Government expense, housed, fed, and finally started in one of the Government colonies. Thousands leave Great Britain and Ireland every year with small capitals,

insufficient to support a family there but ample to pay a third of a flock of sheep or make a fair start here. We believe Dean Dillon's mission will secure for the Plate a share of this class of emigration, which is certainly the most desirable. Whatever we have of Irish emigration to this country is spontaneous; of late years, limited as it was, it has fallen away, and a tour through Ireland now by a gentleman of such his position as Dean Dillon, who will be welcomed by the Irish Bishops,¹⁷ and whose statements respecting this country will carry the greatest weight, cannot fail to be productive of much good, not only to the land of his birth, but also to the country of his adoption. We desire for the Dean the very best success, and hope to see him back in the Plate at the end of the year.

The following is the Minister's letter

Ministry of the Interior

Aires, April 16th 1881

Revd. Dean Dillon,

I beg to advise you that by Decree of the 13th last, His Excellency the President of the Republic has thought proper to send you on a mission to foment Irish emigration to the

Argentine Republic. You will leave for Europe for this purpose as soon as possible. Your mission for the present is limited to making known the advantages which the Argentine Republic offers to honest and industrious emigrants, through its natural wealth, beautiful climate, the customs of its inhabitants and the free principles of its Government. You will also announce that the Executive will petition Congress in the next Session for pecuniary support to help agricultural emigrants who wish to emigrate to this country. You may, therefore, assure those families that wish to come to this Republic that they will obtain from this Government free of charge board and lodging on their arrival, and railway passages to any part of the Republic until they are finally settled; they may also reckon a concession of land sufficient to meet their agricultural requirements

You will transmit to this Ministry a full detailed account of your proceedings in this respect, through the medium of the Immigration Department, and acting in accordance with the Commissary General in Europe, Dn. Carlos Calvo.

During your mission you will obey these provisional instructions until you receive more ample ones. At the same time you are at liberty to submit to the Government, the agents or sub-agents, what you deem necessary for the success of your mission in Ireland.¹⁸

God guard you

De Viso¹⁹

26.

Wednesday 20 April 1881

[The Standard, Wednesday 20 April 1881]

The Lamport & Holt steamer Hipparchus sailed yesterday. Dean Dillon left the mole head about 3 o'clock. He was accompanied there to by quite a crowd of friends, amongst whom we noticed, M. Duggan, T. Duggan, Rev. Fr Timothy, Deputy Murph, J. Murphy, L. Garrahan, J. Gahan, J. McLean, J. Walker, M. Mullen, Reverend Kenelm Vaughan, C. Davis, -- _____ Grace and several others. The Revd Kenelm Vaughan and several others accompanied him on board.

27.

Friday 22 April 1881

Dillon to Fr Kenelm Vaughan²⁰

[The Standard, Friday 22 April 1881]

Dillon wrote a short letter from the Cathedral, Buenos Aires, about Vaughan's work to establish the House of Expiation on the occasion of Vaughan's departure for Europe.²¹

28.

Tuesday 30 August 1881

Dean Dillon's Mission

We note by the papers received last mail that the Dean's mission is at last causing attention in King's land. A London paper makes the following remarks:²²

"The Government land measure provides for the relief of the Irish peasantry by assisting emigration, to which the leading members of the Land League objected, but we think it can be shown that, in so doing, had they succeeded, they would have withheld a benefit from their countrymen, of which many will be glad to avail themselves. It so happens that a special agent from the Argentine Republic, the Rev. Mr Dillon, is in Europe, commissioned by the Argentine Government to promote the emigration of some 2,000 persons, to settle new lands now at disposal, nor is it unlikely that overtures may be made by Mr Dillon calculated to facilitate such an operation. We do not profess to know what the precise instructions of Mr Dillon's mission may be, but we do know that he has been instrumental in the settlement of many thousands of his countrymen in comfortable positions in the Argentine Republic, and that for the last half century Irishmen who have settled in that part of the world now rank among the most wealthy estancieros, or landowners.

"The flow of emigrants into the Argentine Republic, has, of late, been chiefly composed of Italians, and others from the south of Europe, who are spreading over the country, and generally return, after some years, with money to facilitate the passage of others of their countrymen. The territory lately acquired by the Government in the southern province of Buenos Aires, and in other directions, offers great facilities for the settlement of a large number of industrious Irishmen, who would be welcomed by a large number of their numerous fellow countrymen already out there, about whom Mr Dillon will be able to give much useful information.

"This is no uncertain ground, or one where unknown hardships have to be encountered. Herds of cattle, flocks of sheep, and the cultivation of cereal crops are the great and growing staple industries to be dealt with, the necessities of life being relatively cheap and easy of access. In a measure embracing assistance to emigrants, our own colonies naturally occupy a foremost position, but there is something attractive in this invitation of the Argentine Government well worthy of attention under existing circumstances, and we shall be glad to find that Mr Dillon

is able to bring his views before our own Government; moreover, the labour supply in most of our southern colonies appears to be adequate for the present.”

29.

Friday 2 September 1881
Manuel Garcia to Julio Roca

Irish Immigration – Important Letter

Don Manuel R. Garcia, Argentine Minister in London has addressed the following important letter on the above subject to the President of the Republic.

London 3 July 1881

“To the Most Excellent President of the Republic, General Julio A. Roca,
Esteemed General,

In reply to the question you put to me in your letter of June 7th, I beg to give you my views as to the best means of increasing our population, a subject of extreme importance for the Republic. Quality, not quantity, is what we require in immigrants, and, on this premise, we must select those whose passage out is to be by Government, and place them in a position to cultivate the land offered them. Persons of well-known character should alone be chosen as Commissioners to inquire into the antecedents of those who wish to emigrate from Ireland to the Republic. The priests of the emigrant’s parishes, besides being the most competent to give them certificates of good conduct and industry, are the very best commissioners we could have, and I should like to see them accompany their flocks if possible.

The passages should be so arranged as to render fraud impossible on the part of the agents or any others, and it is of still greater importance to see to the hygiene condition of the vessels carrying the emigrants, imposing heavy fines on those which carry more than the proper number, or provide bad food, or unclean berths, or carry passengers afflicted with any contagious disease. We have only to copy in all these respects the United States, where they have attained perfection in these matters.

I send you The Times of June 13th in which you can read the debate in Parliament on the Emigration clause in the Irish Land Bill. Y. E. will see by it what is thought of this country about emigration. In this Bill it is sought to assist the Irish to emigrate, but it will be difficult for those who do not go to British colonies to obtain this assistance.

Well, the Irish distrust assistance or anything also that comes from Government, and prefer to go the United States. And, on the other hand, the Legislature does not consult the best interests of the country, as it might and ought, by helping this expatriation to countries like ours where the great majority of Catholics and our national character is more congenial to Irish Immigrants, who, while making their own fortunes would consume English manufacturers and, besides, would not like those who emigrate to the United States, become ardent supporters of Fenians, Land Leagues etc.

I heartily approve, General, the idea of counterbalancing the Latin element in our population with emigrants from the North of Europe. These emigrants have built up the prosperity of the Western States of the Union, and we should mix the races in order to correct the defects of our own in respect to popular government, habits of order, morality and reflection, all of which we consider subordinate to wild passions, enthusiasm for art and a blind following of certain popular individuals – all of which is fatal to Liberty properly understood.

I advise you to read the articles in the Fortnightly Review on Ireland, Italy and Bi-metalism

I remain,

Y. E. faithful servant,

Manuel R. Garcia.”

Buenos Aires 20 August

The perusal of Dr Garcia’s letter, which I now return to Y. E. has given me a double pleasure; first because I can see that it has impressed you favourably and secondly because I agree with every line of it. All we have to do is to watch vigilantly and see that the elements intended to promote immigration be not diverted to other purposes.

Dr Garcia says that quality not quantity is what we want above all, viz. scrupulously selected agriculturists; that those named to select them should be men of high character, paid for their services and that in Ireland the priests, for their position and character, would be the best for such posts; that everything in the way of fraud with the passage money must be avoided, the salutary state of vessels attended to etc.

These are indispensable points. Many of them are laid down in the Immigration Act of 1876, and in the Landing Regulations which I myself drew up and which are now coming

into play, in spite of private interests and red-tape, which have so often placed the too confiding population of this city in serious danger.

I will send Y. E. interesting details of all these points when Congress closes and you will have a spare moment to listen to your Commissary General of Immigration and

Faithful servant

Sam. Navarro.

Dean Dillon's Mission.

Parliamentary reports give details of the debate on the Irish Land Bill. Many of the remarks of the speakers if they fail to instruct, will certainly amuse a portion of our readers.

Mr O'Donnell "...failed to see why the British taxpayer should be compelled to pay to facilitate emigration from an under-populated country. For his own part, he said that Ireland as a whole was under-populated, and that what was required in Ireland was not emigration, but the transplanting of the surplus population from overcrowded districts to the sparsely populated portions of the island...."

Mr Macdonald enquired "why should the Irish emigrate to Canada? They preferred emigrating to the United States. Twenty million pounds had come from the United States to assist Irish emigration...."

Mr Grant said he did not in the least doubt the benevolent intentions of the Government... or that there were people in Ireland to whom emigration, carried out either by voluntary societies or by Government assistance would be a great boon...

"In the words of Archbishop Manning, there was in Ireland work for every Irish man and woman to do; there was land enough in Ireland for each individual inhabitant. What was wanted was on the part of its rulers a practical acquaintance with the necessities and possibilities which existed in Ireland, which could be acquired only by those who lived there, to enable the people to have that healthy abundance of work which would result in changing the face of the country in many districts."

Sunday 8 January 1882

We publish today Dean Dillon's report to the Minister of the Interior on his emigration mission to Ireland. It is clear that we must do as Australia and Canada do, if we want to compete with them for the Irish emigrant.

Dean Dillon's Mission
His Report to Government
To H. E. the Minister of the Interior,
Dr Don Bernardo de Irigoyen²³

I have the honour to lay before Your Excellency a report on the special mission to Ireland with which I was entrusted by the National Government.

On my arrival in England I waited immediately on some of the members of the Government and was received by them with every attention.²⁴ I also called on several Bishops and went through many of their dioceses with the view of instituting a vigorous propaganda in favour of emigration to the Argentine Republic.²⁵ I had many difficulties to overcome, as this republic was, for the great majority of the people, a country quite unknown, and because there was at the moment, and still is, great political agitation, a just and semi-revolutionary movement of the tenant farmers and their friends against the great landowners, and likewise because the Land League maintains that if Ireland had just laws and a good government, the island could support double the number of inhabitants it now possesses, Ireland will never be well governed till it has its own Parliament in Dublin.

In the meantime the poorer farmers, oppressed on all sides, are forced to emigrate, and the great majority of them go to the United States of North America, as that country is for them a New Ireland; there they meet their relatives; there they receive assistance and protection from the millions of Irishmen settled in that Republic. In the year 1847 the population of Ireland was 8,348, 972 souls. Today, according to the census taken last year, the country has only 5,159, 839 inhabitants. Between those who have emigrated and those who have died of hunger and disease, over three millions of Irishmen have disappeared!!! And this in the short space of thirty four years!!

I did everything in my power to induce the emigrant to come to our hospitable and rich Republic. On several occasions I described verbally and in writing the advantages of this country, the salubrity of our climate, the fertility of our soil, the liberality of our Constitution, and, in general, all the great inducements which this Republic offers to emigrants. Very many are anxious to come out here, but they are so poor that they have not the price of their passage.

The class of emigrant that, in my opinion, is most suitable for forming settlements here is the man who from his boyhood has been accustomed to till the soil. These men are very poor, and they go to North America because the passage to that country costs very little.

Last year 74,140 persons emigrated from Ireland to the United States., 18,000 to Australia and 9,000 to Canada. The Governments of Australia and Canada pay their passage money and give them land free.

One of the Bishops of Minnesota Territory, in the United States, has just founded an Irish colony on land which he himself purchased from the State. He divided it into lots of one hundred acres, gave a lot to each family, and carried them gratis to their destination. As for me, I could offer them nothing. One day, at a numerously attended conference, I said to them that I had something new to tell them – about the country from whence I came and to which I was about to return. I told them all about the Argentine Republic, and as truth always carries conviction with it, next day I was literally besieged by people of all classes, asking me for maps and descriptions of the lands, and what facilities were offered to emigrants. On several subsequent occasions the same occurred, which proves the necessity of providing Government commissioners with those indispensable requisites.

I have already stated, and now repeat it, that our country is completely unknown to the poor classes that emigrate. They know nothing, nothing whatever of South America. I consider that our representatives abroad, the Ministers as well as the Consuls, have done very little indeed towards making our Republic known to the emigrating classes. It is, however, a pleasure to me to be able to state that our Commissioner General of Immigration in Europe, Mr Calvo,²⁶ works incessantly, and with considerable success. I translated into English a brochure written by him in French, and distributed it among the people. It is full of information about this Republic.

The leaders of the Land League prefer that the poor people who are forced to emigrate should go to any country whatever rather than to the colonies of England. The emigrants themselves are of the same way of thinking. Consequently, I think that if Congress would but pass an Act empowering the Government to give fifteen squares of land to each family at some point not too remote, to pay their passage and support them for the first year (binding them to repay the money spent on them within eight years), we should soon have, not one, but many Irish settlements here. I still entertain a hope of seeing such colonies established; and should it be necessary, I will go again to Ireland, whenever the Government may see fit to

send me, to carry to a conclusion a work that, while benefiting this country would be of great service to the unfortunate but honourable people of Ireland.

God preserve your Excellency

Patrick J. E. Dillon.

Notes

- 1 DDA Cullen Papers, 1877: 329/4/VI/Z.
- 2 The Standard, Tuesday 19 January 1875.
- 3 The timeline of Dillon's time in Argentina is remarkable. He arrived in 1863 shortly after ordination and six years later was appointed a Canon at the Cathedral. He climbed the ladder with alacrity.
- 4 Mariano José de Escalada y Bustillo de Zevallos (1799-1870) appointed bishop of Buenos Aires 1854 and arch bishop of Buenos Aires in 1856. Died 28 July 1870 in Rome while attending the First Vatican Council.
- 5 Domingo Faustino Sarmiento (1811-1888). President 1868-1874.
- 6 Nicolás Remigio Aurelio Avellaneda Silva (1837-1885) Minister of Justice and Public Instruction 1868-1873 and President 1874-1880.
- 7 The brothers Edward Thomas (1832-1899) and Michael George Mulhall (1836-1900) were co-proprietors and co-editors of The Standard.
- 8 The text of this last paragraph is blurred on the microfilm and difficult to read.
- 9 Henry Edward Manning (1908-1892) created Cardinal Arch bishop of Westminster 1865
- 10 Tobias Kirby (1803/4-1895). Hye remained in Rome after ordination acting as Vice Rector of the Irish College 1835-1848 and subsequently as Rectpr 1848-1894. Created a domestic prelate by Leo XIII in 1878, For many years was the Roman agent and correspondent of various Irish bishops.
- 11 Letter annotated iu another hand "Recd. About 20 Jan 1875" and "Ansd. 9 Feb 1875."
See Southern Cross, Numero del Centenario 1875 - 1975, "Pasaron la antorcha los editors de The Southern Cross, pp.15-18.
- 12 Francis Healy Mulhall (1845-1898) arrived in Argentina in 1865, was a journalist and younger brother of Edward Thomas and Michael George Mulhall.
- 13 In TSC 1975 Numero Del Centenario listing of the editors pp.13-15 there is no mention of Frank Mulhall.
- 14 Laurence Garrahan (1850-1911) son of Patrick Garrahan (of Westmeath) and Joan Kenny. estanciero and commission agent. Held power of attorney for Dean Dillon when Dillon travelled to Europe on government business in 1881. Married to Elena Murphy (1854-1947) at Las Heras in 1882 Monsignor Dillon officiating. They had twelve children. See Coghlan, Vol.1, pp.385-386.
- 15 Antonio del Viso (1830-1904) lawyer and politician and one time Minister of the Interior.
- 16 Would Dillon be welcomed by the Irish bishops? That is very debateable as a few years later two members of the Irish hierarchy were outspoken in their views about emigration from Ireland to Argentina. Dr O'Dwyer (the bishop of Limerick) in a letter to his Vicar General, Fr Moloney, commented on the recent opening of an agency encouraging emigration principally to Argentina. The bishop noted that it seemed to him that it was "the clear duty of the clergy to discourage by every means in their power the emigration which is being organised from this city and neighbourhood to Buenos Ayres..." The Freeman's Journal, 12 November 1888.
- 17 Dr Croke the Archbishop of Cashel in a long letter of 23 January 1889 to the editor of The Freeman's Journal set out his views on this topic warning those who might entertain an idea of migrating to Argentina. See The Freeman's Journal, 26 January 1889. Croke set out in plain terms the reasons

why he discouraged “our people from trying their fortune in the earthly Paradise – as interested parties have described it – of South America. The country, its climate, language, manners and necessities, the conditions of employment, and all the incidents of everyday life are unknown to them. Not to go beyond these material considerations, it is obvious that under any circumstances the Irish emigrant should be very careful about taking a momentous a step in transferring himself to such a community....” The Freeman’s Journal, 4 March 1889.

- 18 Presumably Dillon as instructed, submitted reports to the Government through Calvo and it would be interesting to have the perspective of the Argentine side on the Dillon mission to Ireland.
- 19 Fr Kenelm Vaughan (1840-1909), brother of Herbert Vaughan, Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster.
- 20 See Edward Walsh “Missing Believed Lost – Books, Bibles & Buenos Aires” in South-Eastern Catholic History, No.11, 2021-2022, pp.49-57.
- 21 The paper was probably The Times.
- 22 Bernardo de Irigoyen (1822-1906) Argentine lawyer, diplomat and politician and Foreign Minister in 1882.
- 23 The Times reported that Dillon had several meetings with Prime Minister William Gladstone at No. 10 Downing Street.
- 24 It is not known which members of the Irish hierarchy were approached by Dillon. Historian Dermot Keogh told the writer that he had little success in obtaining information from Irish diocesan archives.
- 25 Carlos Calvo (1824-1906) diplomat and historian who spent most of his life in the Argentine diplomatic service and was the principal Argentine immigration official in Europe during 1880s.

Archives

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| DDA | Dublin Diocesan Archive, 204 Clonliffe Road,
Dublin DO3 PD86, Ireland |
| PICRA | Pontifical Irish College Rome Archive, Pontificio
Collegio Irlandese, Via del Santi Quattro 1, 00184 Rome, Italy. |