Dillon, John

by Frank Callanan

Dillon, John (1851–1927), nationalist parliamentarian, was born 8 September 1851 in Blackrock, Co. Dublin, third child and second son of John Blake Dillon (qv), politician and lawyer, and Adelaide Dillon (neé Hart). Dillon's birth took place while his mother was home visiting her family in the interval between his father's flight to New York after the abortive rising of 1848 and his return under an amnesty in 1854. Dillon was educated privately until the age of thirteen (one of his tutors was the future Fenian leader James Stephens (qv)). He then attended the University School in Harcourt St.

John Blake Dillon, elected for Tipperary the previous year, died in 1866, leaving a large family, and his wife died in May 1872. John Dillon was looked after by the extended family, and when in Dublin lived with his maternal uncle Charles Hart (1824–98), whose residence at 2 North Great George's St. became in time Dillon's own. Dillon attended the Catholic University as an arts student from 1865 to 1870. After an abortive apprenticeship with a Manchester cotton-broker, he entered the Catholic University medical school in Cecilia St. and obtained a degree from the College of Surgeons. For 1874–5 he was auditor of the Literary & Historical Society. From 1870 he suffered the first of the sustained bouts of ill health which were to punctuate his political career. He underwent a mild religious crisis as he struggled to reconcile his inherited catholicism with contemporary scientific thought. From early in life he had a marked austerity of temper.

Early political life The close ties through his father to John Mitchel (qv) and John Martin (qv) were a significant influence on Dillon. He was not a Fenian, but the nature of his convictions led the highly astute Superintendent John Mallon (qv) of the DMP to characterise him in 1880 as ‘really a cool Fenian, trusted by the American branch’ (Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell*, 30). Dillon struggled to square Mitchel's deprecation of ‘the sham of parliamentary representation’ with the lure of the efficacy of C. S. Parnell (qv), and in 1877–8 privately conceived a scheme which strikingly anticipated that of Arthur Griffith (qv) a quarter-century later, for the withdrawal of the Irish parliamentary representation from Westminster and the setting up of a parliament in Dublin (Lyons, *Dillon*, 23).

Dillon joined the Home Rule League of Isaac Butt (qv) on its foundation in November 1873. He campaigned for the dying John Mitchel in the second Tipperary election of 1875, when he first encountered William O'Brien (qv). After an interval of illness, he was elected in February 1877 to the council of the Home Rule League. As relations between Butt and the obstructives moved to their crisis, Dillon at the council of the Home Rule League in December 1878 fiercely assailed Isaac Butt, who was dead three months later.

Dillon became from the autumn of 1879 heavily involved in the land agitation. He was a member of the original committee of the Land League, and of its executive the following year. Just before Christmas he left to raise funds with Parnell in North America, where he remained until July 1880. He was elected in absentia for Tipperary at the general election, and subsequently to the committee of the Irish party. Following the rejection by the house of lords of the compensation for disturbance bill, Dillon won notoriety with a provocative speech in Kildare on 10 August, in which he advocated a general strike against rent.

On 24 January 1881 Dillon provoked a celebrated set-piece confrontation in the commons. In a debate on a government coercion measure, he refused to give way to Gladstone, whom the speaker had called. As he was removed by the sergeant-at-arms, Parnell moved that the prime minister ‘be no longer heard’, and was suspended and ejected, as were a further thirty-four Irish members in succession. In an atmosphere of deepening crisis, the executive of the Land League met in Paris, where Dillon was designated to take the place of the arrested Michael Davitt (qv) as the Land League's chief organiser in Ireland. Dillon's rhetoric in Ireland was determinedly, and crudely, inflammatory. Later aptly characterised by Conor Cruise O'Brien as ‘thunder-stealing’ in relation to Parnell (Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell*, 66), he denounced in Dublin the government's land bill. A highly provocative speech in Grangemockler, Co. Tipperary, earned him the distinction of being the first MP arrested under the coercion act. He was incarcerated in Kilmainham from 2 May to 6 August 1881, when a sharp deterioration in his health led to his discharge.

At a banquet in Dublin on 29 August to mark his release, Dillon signalled the extent of his opposition to the land act by announcing that, so as not to cause dissension, he was retiring from politics for some months. Dillon's succession of withdrawals and threats of withdrawals from public life in the course of the first two decades of his public life, some of which were for reasons of health, came to attract the most pungent asperity of T. M. Healy (qv). Dillon, however, was drawn back into the fray by Parnell's arrest on 13 October, brought about by the government's belief that Parnell was committed to the thwarting of the land act, which was just what Parnell's policy was not. Dillon was himself arrested on 15 October. Their incarceration led to a curious inversion of their positions. Parnell was now prepared to countenance a call for the withholding of rents. In the minority opposed to doing so, Dillon in the event signed the ‘no rent manifesto’ along with the other leaders.

Parnell, Dillon, and J. J. O'Kelly (qv) were released from Kilmainham on 2 May 1882. The Phoenix Park murders occurred four days later. Though he dissented from Parnell's moderate course on the land act, Dillon deferred any gesture of dissociation while the crisis created by the assassinations ran its course. He attended the meeting in Avondale in early September at which Parnell announced his intention of creating a new national organisation. Shortly afterwards Dillon announced he was resigning his seat and quitting Irish politics, citing considerations

of health. In the early summer of 1883 Dillon left Ireland to join his elder brother in Colorado, and remained out of Irish politics for two years.

The Plan of Campaign Dillon arrived back in Dublin on 7 July 1885, just after Salisbury had replaced Gladstone as prime minister. At the general election some months later, Dillon contested and lost Tyrone North, but was elected for Mayo East, the constituency he was to represent for thirty-three years. When Parnell imposed Capt. William O'Shea (qv) on Galway in the by-election occasioned by the decision of T. P. O'Connor (qv) to sit for the Liverpool seat to which he was also elected, Dillon declined to append his name to a public declaration in favour of Parnell, stating he would not intervene unless Healy – who had condemned O'Shea's nomination – was attacked.

Gladstone's home rule bill, introduced on 8 April and lost on 8 June, impressed Dillon with the sense that there now existed a reciprocal bond between nationalist Ireland and the ‘English democracy’. He spent most of the election campaign that followed speaking on English platforms. With the defeat of Parnell's tenant relief bill in the new parliament, Dillon headed back to Ireland to immerse himself in renewed agrarian agitation. He was one of the chief architects of the ‘Plan of Campaign’, a scheme to compel the reduction of rents on individual estates by the collective action of their tenants. On Dillon and O'Brien fell the crushing burden of the Plan, proclaimed by the government as unlawful and criminal conspiracy. Dillon and others were prosecuted unsuccessfully in February 1887.

Arthur Balfour (qv), the new chief secretary for Ireland, responded with a stringent ‘perpetual’ coercion act. Dillon went to Mitchelstown, Co. Cork, on 9 September 1887. As he climbed on to a brake to address the crowd, the police pressed forward. In the confrontation that ensued, the police, driven back to their barracks, opened fire, killing three men. Dillon's courage in walking across the by then deserted square to the barracks to engage with the police averted further bloodshed. With O'Brien in prison, he found himself alone responsible for the direction of the Plan for a time. His situation was increasingly embattled, as Parnell continued to stand aloof. Dillon brought all his fury as an agrarian nationalist and liberal catholic to bear on the papal rescript of April 1888 condemning the Plan. Parnell at the Eighty Club in May made public his own reservations about the Plan.

Dillon was imprisoned in Dundalk from 20 June to 15 September 1888, when he was released on account of his deteriorating health. He left for Australia and ultimately the US on 6 March 1889, on a tour to raise funds to sustain the Plan of Campaign, and was gone for thirteen months. When he arrived back in Ireland in April 1890, the Plan of Campaign estates were still more beleaguered, and Parnell's aloofness tested to breaking point the loyalty even of William O'Brien. Dillon's arrest at Ballybrack on 18 September coincided with that of O'Brien. They resolved to break bail to get to America to raise more money. In early October they made a

midnight departure from Dalkey harbour, and from Cherbourg reached New York on 2 November.

The Parnell split Dillon was thus in the US when the divorce crisis broke. He was shaken by the degree of Liberal and nonconformist antipathy to Parnell that culminated in the release of Gladstone's letter to John Morley (qv), and aghast at Parnell's manifesto. Dillon and O'Brien, along with the rest of the American delegates save for the loyal T. C. Harrington (qv), pronounced Parnell's continued leadership to be impossible. The debates in Committee Room 15 of the house of commons took their course, and the party split, with Parnell in the minority, on 6 December 1890.

While Dillon and O'Brien had pronounced against Parnell, they held back from complete identification with the opposition to Parnell. While they continued to act in unison throughout the split, and proffered an alternative anti-Parnellite axis to that of Healy and Justin McCarthy (qv), their personal positions were divergent. If Dillon was without O'Brien's residual emotional susceptibility to Parnell, neither did he have O'Brien's deeper intuitive sense of the cataclysm of the split. His apparent pragmatic rationality in seeking to wrest control of the direction of anti-Parnellism from Healy, and to put the Liberal–Nationalist alliance back on course, was to that extent somewhat self-deceiving.

O'Brien left New York for France on 13 December on a mission to secure Parnell's retirement on relatively favourable terms. Dillon followed later, reaching Le Havre on 18 January 1891. The negotiations with Parnell failed, having as their principal political consequence the strengthening of Healy's ascendancy within the opposition to Parnell in Ireland, and the deepening of the rift between Healy, and Dillon and O'Brien. On 12 February they crossed to Folkestone, whence they were taken via New Scotland Yard to Galway jail to serve the six-month terms of imprisonment imposed the previous October after they had broken bail. In Galway jail they exchanged restive notes. Persuaded that Parnell's ‘master passion now is to have his revenge on Gladstone, the radicals and his enemies in general’ (Callanan, *Parnell split*, 140) and alarmed at Healy's supremacy among the anti-Parnellites, Dillon overbore O'Brien's inclination to hold back from aligning themselves squarely with the anti-Parnellites on their release. Their declaration against Parnell outside Galway jail on 30 July, coming after his third by-election defeat in the split, removed any prospect of revival in Parnell's fortunes before the general election. Of Parnell's last speech eight days before he died on 27 September 1891, Dillon wrote in his diary: ‘Parnell at Creggs yesterday, incoherent scurrility – sad, sad. He must positively be going mad’ (Lyons*, Dillon*, 143). Dillon had taken up a position from which he could challenge Healy, but at the price of ratifying Healy's past conduct. On Parnell's death, Dillon and O'Brien found themselves the object of bitter Parnellite execration, vigorously expressed on the streets of Dublin.

After Parnell The remaining years of the nineteenth century after Parnell's death were marked by persisting acrimony within the Irish representation at Westminster. While at the 1892 election the Parnellites were reduced to nine seats, the seventy-two anti-Parnellites returned were bitterly riven between partisans of Dillon and Healy. This tripartite division was acted out in a parliamentary setting which had shifted adversely to home rule. If the passage of Gladstone's home rule bill through the commons (before going down to defeat in the house of lords) seemed at least symbolically propitious, it was in reality a coda to the Parnell era. Rosebery succeeded Gladstone, and the Conservatives returned to office at the 1895 election.

The first arena in the trial of strength between partisans of Dillon and Healy was the struggle for control of the *Freeman's Journal*, with which Healy's *National Press* had amalgamated: the Parnellite *Evening Herald* gleefully published in pamphlet form under the title *The prize fighters of Princes Street* an account of the interminable meetings of directors and shareholders that ended with the defeat of the Healy faction. In the run-up to the 1895 election, Healy increasingly resorted to open confrontation with Dillon and his supporters. His support of the candidacy of William Martin Murphy (qv) in Kerry South after the election permitted Dillon to move against him, as he had long been urged to do by O'Brien. In November 1895 Healy and his lieutenants were expelled from the council of the Irish National Federation, and from the committee of the Irish party.

On 21 November 1895 at Brompton Oratory the bishop of Galway officiated at Dillon's marriage to Elizabeth (qv), fourteen years his junior, the daughter of Sir James Mathew (qv), an Irish judge of the English high court. On 18 February 1896 Dillon was elected chairman of the anti-Parnellite party, proposed by the outgoing chairman Justin McCarthy and seconded by Michael Davitt.

Dillon's response to an unpropitious political situation was one of defensive retrenchment. He tightened the discipline of the party, and was unable to dissemble an implacable hostility towards the manifestations of what became known as constructive unionism. He was deeply antagonistic to Horace Plunkett (qv), the moving spirit of the ‘recess committee’, although he did participate in the all-Ireland committee on Irish taxation. He viewed with mistrust the local government act of 1898, suspicious alike of the relatively enlightened unionism of Gerald Balfour (qv) and the limited re-engagement of southern unionist figures in civic affairs.

In January 1898 Dillon attended the meeting in Westport at which O'Brien established the agrarian All for Ireland League, but remained unswervingly committed to the idea of a primarily parliamentary movement. In what was conceived as a gesture to facilitate the negotiations for the reunion of the Irish party, Dillon in February 1898 resigned the chairmanship of the anti-Parnellite party. Paralysed by his mistrust of Healy and John Redmond (qv), he thereafter contrived to lose the initiative. In the election for the chairman of the reunified party on 6 February 1900 he supported Redmond over T. C. Harrington. In the immediate aftermath

Dillon remained sullenly suspicious of Redmond's dealings with Healy as Redmond struggled to consolidate his initially precarious leadership. In the event, a convention in June 1900 formalised the position of the United Irish League as the national organisation and greatly weakened the position of Healy, who was expelled from the party in December 1900.

Dillon stood aloof from the land conference which preceded the Wyndham land act of 1903, and allied himself with Davitt, Thomas Sexton (qv), and the *Freeman's Journal* against Redmond and O'Brien in opposition to the act, notably in a speech in his Mayo constituency on 25 August 1903, sometimes referred to as ‘the Swinford revolt’, in which he disavowed ‘any faith in the doctrine of conciliation’ as advocated by the Irish landlords (Lyons, *Dillon*, 239–40). On 6 November O'Brien responded, announcing his resignation from parliament and from the directory of the UIL. What had been the most illustrious partnership in the history of the Irish party was irreparably sundered.

The home rule crisis and the rise of Sinn Féin The Liberal electoral landslide of January 1906 appeared to transform the prospects for home rule. At the time of the debacle of the Irish councils bill, introduced on 7 May 1907, personal catastrophe overtook Dillon. His wife Elizabeth, who had borne their five children, and with whom he had spent much time travelling in 1903–4 when he had himself been seriously ill, died on 14 May 1907.

Of the Liberal ameliorative measures for Ireland, Dillon was most closely identified with the Irish universities act of 1908, although he incurred the wrath of the Irish-Ireland lobby by his firm and lucid, if unavailing, opposition at the national convention of February 1909 to the proposal to make Irish a compulsory subject for matriculation. He braved further opposition in some quarters in Ireland by his speeches in favour of the Liberal budget during the budget crisis. As home rule came to the fore in the wake of the two general elections of 1910, Dillon, Joseph Devlin (qv), and T. P. O'Connor were Redmond's closest collaborators. On 2 March 1913 Redmond and Dillon, along with O'Connor and Devlin, reluctantly agreed to the proposal pressed by Lloyd George that individual Ulster counties could opt out of home rule for a period of three years, after which they would come under the control of a home rule parliament. Redmond was subsequently compelled to accept an extension of the period of exclusion to six years. Edward Carson (qv) flamboyantly repudiated the concession. Although he attended the Buckingham Palace conference in late July 1914, Dillon largely withdrew into the wings in the final stages of the negotiations that led to the enactment on 18 September of the home rule bill, accompanied by a suspensory act that prevented its coming into operation until the war's end.

On the outbreak of the first world war, Dillon assented to his leader's stance in support of the British war effort, but did not share Redmond's ardour, nor did he participate in the recruiting campaign in Ireland. He became increasingly concerned

at the effect on Irish opinion of the government's marked disregard of Irish nationalist sensitivities as the war progressed. For the duration of the rising of Easter 1916 Dillon was the only Irish party leader in Dublin, immured in his house in North Great George's St., a short walk from the General Post Office. On the immediate aftermath he wrote urging Redmond to impress upon the government ‘the extreme unwisdom of any wholesale shooting of prisoners’ (Lyons, *Dillon*, 373), and sought to restrain the authorities in Dublin. He reached London on 10 May, and in the commons the next day denounced the executions that had taken place in a speech of formidable vehemence, which outraged many English parliamentarians and startled even some of his Irish colleagues. He highlighted, perhaps a little too starkly, the predicament of the Irish party: ‘you are washing out our whole life work in a sea of blood’ (Lyons, *Dillon*, 381). What transpired to be the last of the Dublin executions, including that of James Connolly (qv), took place the following morning. By September 1916 he was writing to O'Connor: ‘. . . enthusiasm and trust in Redmond and the party is *dead* so far as the mass of the people is concerned’ (Lyons, *Dillon*, 403).

With the failure of Lloyd George's further initiative to resolve the home rule issue, Dillon did not further engage in high politics at Westminster and refused to participate in the Irish convention in July 1917. He furiously denounced conscription, the culminating move in what he came to see as Lloyd George's scheme to destroy the Irish party, and participated in the anti-conscription campaign in Ireland. At the Mansion House conference in April 1918 he encountered enemies old (Healy and O'Brien) and new (Éamon de Valera (qv) and Griffith).

Leader of the Irish party Redmond died on 6 March 1918. Dillon gave the peroration over his grave, and became at 66 for the first time leader of the united Irish party for what was to be the last nine months of its existence as a significant force. In this last struggle Dillon was without illusions, writing to O'Connor: ‘the Britishers look upon me as a kind of half S.F., with a dash of Bolshevism thrown in, while the S.F. leaders are out for all they are worth to down me because they think I have *some* hold still on the masses of the people here’ (Lyons, *Dillon*, 435). In Ireland, Dillon fought Sinn Féin with spirit and vigour, but the rhythm of events and of the war itself across the seemingly interminable year of 1918 was unremittingly adverse to the Irish party. Dillon's candidate lost the last of the by-elections of the old parliament, in Cavan East, to Arthur Griffith (whom Dillon detested) in June. He fought on, warning that Sinn Féin's pursuit of a republic would lead to bloodshed and defeat, and characterised abstentionism as ‘a policy of lunatics’ (Lyons, *Dillon*, 439). At the election of December 1918, the Irish party's vote held up respectably enough, but it was routed in terms of parliamentary seats. Dillon himself lost Mayo East to de Valera by a margin of two to one.

Dillon thereafter had little public involvement, though he remained an attentive observer of political affairs, as his correspondence with T. P. O'Connor attests. It was as a private citizen that Dillon with his daughter watched the Custom House blaze in May 1921: ‘the most beautiful building in Ireland a mass of flame and awful

clouds of black smoke . . . deliberately destroyed by the youth of Ireland as the latest expression of idealism and patriotism' (Lyons, *Dillon*, 467). Implacable in his private criticism of the Cumann na nGaedheal government, Dillon took a more indulgent attitude towards Éamon de Valera by reason of a complex identification which he articulated at the Redmond commemoration in 1924: 'Mr Lloyd George used the Sinn Féin party to drive the Irish party out of his road in the house of commons, just as he has since used the treaty men to crush the republicans.' James Dillon (qv) recalled de Valera calling on his father in 1926 with a view to Dillon approaching Baldwin in the matter of the oath of allegiance: their conversation, John Dillon said, mainly concerned Oliver Cromwell (qv). Dillon died 4 August 1927 in a London nursing home after an operation for gallstones.

Likenesses of Dillon include 'Force no remedy', a caricature by Harry Furniss (qv) of Dillon and Parnell in Kilmainham jail, *Vanity Fair*, 7 December 1881; and 'The Plan of Campaign', a caricature by 'Ape' (Cario Pellegrini), *Vanity Fair*, 7 May 1887. There are two drawings of Dillon by Henry Holiday in the NGI, together with pencil sketches by Sydney P. Hall. E. T. Reed's witty cartoon of Dillon and Healy as the Irish question is reproduced in *Edward Tennyson Reed*, ed. Shane Leslie (1957), 110. His papers are in TCD library.

Assessment The young John Dillon was a striking figure. George Meredith described his eyes as 'the most beautiful I have ever beheld in a head – clear, deep wells, with honesty at bottom' (McDonagh, 183). The effect of his looks was heightened by a gaunt vulnerability. T. P. O'Connor wrote: 'Tall, thin, fragile, his physique was that of a man who has periodically to seek flight from death in change of scene and air' (*Parnell movement*, 342). Such was the sensitivity of his aspect that, according to Michael McDonagh, he sat for the Christ in an altar-piece painted for an Australian church by Henry Holiday. According to an 1897 note in the diaries of Lady Gregory (qv), unverifiable but for which R. B. O'Brien (qv) is possibly the source, Parnell had described Dillon as 'a black peacock' (*Diaries*, 136, 146).

A classic nineteenth-century patriot propelled into public life by the critical condition of his country, Dillon was in many respects temperamentally miscast as a politician. Paradoxically this added to the romantic allure of his early image. Healy's friend the New York journalist Harold Frederic wrote irritably: 'somehow the notion has got abroad that John Dillon is different from the rest – more conscientious, more abstractedly patriotic, more poetically impracticable' (*New York Times*, 7 Aug. 1887). He was, as Francis Cruise O'Brien (qv) shrewdly observed, a man 'who has dominated, not merely by virtue of his good qualities, but by virtue of his limitations' (*Leader*, 12 Mar. 1910).

With his attributes of integrity and disinterestedness came a pronounced inflexibility. If he was in many respects progressive, he was not, as Francis Cruise O'Brien noted, modern: 'one conceives of him . . . not merely as the stern unbending Roman patriot, but as the Roman patriot transplanted into this modern time with all his

rigidness and prejudice and severity untempered and unaccommodated'. Frederic malignly imputed to him a sepulchral fanaticism, 'as if he were a materialized portrait of Philip II stepping out of its framed entombment in the Escurial [sic]' (*New York Times*, 7 Aug. 1887). Healy revelled in Thomas Sexton's characterisation of Dillon as 'the melancholy humbug'. Dillon's nationalism was even at its most apparently populistic marked by a certain hauteur. T. P. Gill (qv) noted that he 'always speaks of the Irish as "my people" in a way which, in his mouth, gives the phrase a strange, patriarchal significance' (Meehan, *Ireland's patriots*).

D. P. Moran's (qv) *Leader* in 1910 termed Dillon 'a political fossil . . . a politician who has failed to grow up since thirty years ago' (Callanan, *T. M. Healy*, 429). Dillon's political ideas certainly set early and hard. The two defining motifs of his career were his agrarianism, and his commitment to the idea of a united, highly disciplined nationalist movement, themes which together made up his conception of national political mobilisation. In terms of the Irish party, Dillon was on the agrarian left. He never relinquished the conviction that the land struggle was the motor of popular nationalism, nor mastered his aversion towards Conservative-driven land purchase measures that he saw (correctly in one significant aspect) as a stratagem to sap the patriotic ardour of the Irish tenant farmers.

After the fall of Parnell, Dillon elevated effect into cause in asserting that the reason for the success of Parnell's leadership in the 1880s was that it was sustained by a massive and cohesive national movement. Challenged by the Parnellites of 1890–1900, and harried by Healy and his allies, Dillon had to assert the necessity for unity and order. However, his unremitting insistence on a tightly disciplined and highly centralised national movement in the long period of Conservative hegemony (1895–1906), when the Irish party lacked sustaining impetus, risked appearing to elevate the hegemony of the party into an end in itself. Dillon had an exaggeratedly *dirigiste* conception of the Irish party and its machine: *étatisme* without a state. He was profoundly suspicious of anyone outside the fold of parliamentary nationalism who engaged in any form of advocacy or activism that impinged on the domain of the Irish party, which he conceived monopolistically and guarded with rigid exclusivity. His strictures extended impartially to southern unionists who engaged with the land question, and to partisans of the Gaelic League.

On his death the *Manchester Guardian* wrote that Dillon 'was not only a great Irish Nationalist; he was a great Liberal'. Its parliamentary correspondent characterised him as 'of the old European liberal school – in thought and feeling as Gladstonian as Gladstone' (*Manchester Guardian*, 5 Aug. 1927). This was perhaps an elegy for an older liberalism as much as for Dillon, and carried too far the ascription of Liberal sympathies to Dillon.

Throughout his career Dillon had maintained a wide-ranging interest in, and radical anti-imperialist views on foreign affairs, notably on the Boer war and on Egypt. Healy mocked Dillon's cosmopolitan radicalism, and Harold Frederic in the same vein

derided the fact that he was prodigiously well read: ‘He has the library one would expect to find in the house of a well-to-do rural physician, of a metaphysical turn, who preferred leisure among his books to general practice . . . No educated man ever sat in parliament with a slighter interest in, and knowledge of, the things with which it is supposed to deal’ (‘The rhetoricians of Ireland’, 726).

Dillon is entitled to much of the credit for maintaining the position of the party in the country until the crash of December 1918. The massive electoral ascendancy of the Irish party up to that time belied the scale of the threats that beset it. Dillon had written with understatement to T. P. O'Connor in 1910: ‘the truth is that Irish politics is and has been for a considerable time, a much more complex problem than it used to be’ (Lyons, *Dillon*, 313). The Irish party of Redmond and Dillon has for long been consigned to a *temps perdu* in the evolution of Irish statehood. It is facile, if no longer quite de rigueur, to overlook how close the Irish party came to success, and to discount its enduring contribution to democratic politics in Ireland.

Dillon papers, TCD; Redmond papers, NLI; Davitt papers, TCD; Harrington papers, NLI; Patrick J. Meehan, *Ireland's patriots, Dillon and O'Brien* (n.d.); T. P. O'Connor, *The Parnell movement* (2nd ed., 1886); Harold Frederic, ‘The Parnellite members’, *New York Times*, 7 Aug. 1887; id., ‘The rhetoricians of Ireland’, *Fortnightly Review*, new ser. no. 324 (1 Dec. 1893), 711–27; T. M. Healy, *Why Ireland is not free: a study of twenty years of Irish politics* (1898); Francis Cruise O'Brien, ‘Mr John Dillon’, *Leader*, 12 Mar. 1910; Michael McDonagh, *The home rule movement* (1920); John Dillon, speech at the Redmond commemoration, Wexford, 9 Mar. 1924 (typescript, Dillon papers, TCD, MS 6749/712); *Freeman's Journal*, 10 Mar. 1924; *Manchester Guardian*, 5 Aug. 1927; Conor Cruise O'Brien, *Parnell and his party* (1957); F. S. L. Lyons, *The Irish parliamentary party 1890–1910* (1961); id., *John Dillon* (1968); Frank Callanan, typescript memo of conversation with James Dillon 26 Sept. 1970 at 40 Elgin Road, Dublin, corrected and annotated by James Dillon 18 Oct. 1979; Frank Callanan, *The Parnell split* (1992); id., *T. M. Healy* (1996); Maurice Manning, *James Dillon: a biography* (1999)