

"And have you been at your present work long?"

"More than five years. I have married a wife in my own sphere of life, and she and I try to keep an honest home for our little ones; but we began low, and we have found it something of a pull up-hill as yet. It will be long before I can squeeze the money for a trip to the old country," he added, with a smile.

"Will that be your first holiday?"

"Ay, sir, surely; I nearly went this year. My master is a right good-hearted man; he knew how I wished to cross the Irish Sea, and when it came my turn for a holiday, he handed me three pounds over and above my wages, and bid me go to Ireland, and spend it there. It was *very* generous, wasn't it, sir?"

"Yes, but you did not go."

"I told him I could not leave the wife and the children just then, but he bade me keep the three pounds all the same. *Very* kind, he was!"

"Well, Dillon, if you ever do reach our country, come and see me." I drew my card-case out as I spoke. "Here is my address, and you shall have a hearty welcome. I should be proud to do the honours of our land to such a true son of Old Ireland."

His swarthy face had flushed as he noticed me putting my hand in my pocket, but when he saw that I offered him not silver, but a slip of card-board, he took it eagerly. I could not have offered him money after what he had told me.

"Bank!" shouted the conductor, and I prepared to descend from my perch. "Good-bye, Dillon," I said, shaking hands with my new friend heartily.

"Good-bye, sir, and God bless you."

Somehow, those words sounded very differently from what they had done half-an-hour ago. They had been only a form then, they were uttered like a prayer now.

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That omnibus drive took place three years ago. A little while since I received a letter, written in an ill-formed hand by one evidently unaccustomed to the task of wielding a pen. It was signed, "Ellen Dillon."

The writer told me she was the wife of the man to whom I had talked during a journey from the "Royal Oak" to the Bank; she said she wrote according to a promise made to her dead husband.

"He bid me say, sir, that he never forgot your words. He will never be able to meet you in Ireland, but he has claimed to enter the other country you spoke about; and he found your words were true about God being at hand to listen to us if we turn to Him in prayer. That was his message, sir; he made me learn it by heart, so that I might write it out to you. He was killed by an accident, sir, quite sudden—but he bids me say he leaves me and the children comfortably off."

That was the letter. There were splashes, as of tears, upon the last page. There was no address, so that I could not reply to it, and I was sorry that it was out of my power to see if my friend's meaning as to the words "comfortably off" was the same as mine. It would have been a pleasure to me to give aid to those Bob Dillon had loved.

But though all links are broken between us here, I shall look to meet him, washed and purified from the stain of his once wild life, in the "other country"—the land that is very far off, and yet so near.