

and while thus occupied, Mrs. Mathers, the housekeeper, entered with a tray containing his dinner. The meal consisted of two mutton chops, three potatoes, a small loaf of bread, and a pot of tea, &c. She merely remarked, as she laid the articles on the table, that he was later than usual that evening,—for, strange to say, she was a woman of few words.

“Yes, Mrs. Mathers,” he replied, “business must be attended to.” This maxim she had heard so often before that she did not think it called for any reply, and without further remark she left the room.

Mr. Krell quickly disposed of his modest meal. He really ate it as if he had been hungry. Then he rang a bell, and on Mrs. Mathers re-appearing, he asked her to remove the dishes, and to her astonishment requested the materials for a tumbler of hot toddy to be introduced. This order having been obeyed, he unlocked a small closet in the room and took therefrom a bottle of (must we say it?) Scotch whiskey. He then prepared the toddy, tasted it twice, with a teaspoon, and appeared satisfied with the result. Then he added two more pieces of coal to the fire, brought his chair immediately in front of it, sat himself, brought the toddy within reach, and relapsed into thought.

“So I’m worth a million, at last!” said he to himself. “Long and steadily have I striven for it.” Here he began to dangle the heavy and old-fashioned bunch of seal keys suspended from his watch chain; and after a few moments thus employed he mentally came to the conclusion that he had reason to be entirely satisfied with himself, so far. Not that he was at all contented. On the contrary, he already began to plan larger schemes than ever; but up to the present, he observed, Mr. Krell is on the whole entitled to express satisfaction with himself and accordingly he did so, sealing the approval with a long sip at the toddy.

While replacing the glass on the table, the door noiselessly opened, and a man, of about Mr. Krell’s age, entered, unannounced, uninvited, and unexpected. The stranger laid his hat and gloves on the sideboard, deliberately took a chair, placed it opposite to Krell, and then and there seated himself. Mr. Krell watched these movements in speechless astonishment.

The stranger was apparently indifferent to Krell’s looks, for he quietly rubbed his hands, and acted as if he felt perfectly at home. He took the poker, stirred up the fire, and then composedly sat back in his chair, and gave a slight nod of recognition to Mr. Krell. The latter continued to gaze with astonishment, but seemed unable to speak. The stranger, after a moment’s pause, arose, approached Krell, and patted him on the shoulder two or three times. “What’s the matter, Krell?” said he. “Why don’t you welcome me? I’m glad to see you, old fellow. Wish you a Merry Christmas, and congratulate you on your good fortune.”

Without waiting for any reply, the stranger laughed. Krell was still more astonished at the laugh, for he fancied it resembled his own; but as it was nearly thirty years since he was last guilty of laughing, he was not quite positive as to the resemblance.

The stranger’s hands on Krell’s shoulders gave him an unpleasant feeling; they had an unearthly chilliness about them. Yet he was unaccountably unable to resent the familiarity, although he struggled hard to do so.

“So you have made a million at last, Krell?” repeated the stranger. “Allow me again to congratulate you;” and then he proffered his hand, and Krell actually, but timidly, shook it.

“You must be a happy man, this evening, Krell,” he continued. “Don’t you feel rich?” and as the stranger chuckled, Krell’s indignation increased. He always kept his business profits as