

# New Dominion Monthly.

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## MR. KRELL'S MILLION.

### A CHRISTMAS STORY.

It was nearly nine on Christmas-eve. The weather was very cold, and in a certain street it was also very dark. In one of the many offices in this place, a small one, whose walls had long ceased acquaintance with paint and whitewash but were abundantly supplied with cob-webs, there stood at a high desk, surmounted with a lamp emitting a sickly light, Mr. Dakins, busily employed in completing a balance sheet.

Mr. Dakins' appearance was a puzzle to most people. It was difficult to determine whether he was comparatively young, middle-aged, or old. At times, and after he had enjoyed his lunch—surmised to be his dinner, and which usually consisted of three mutton-pies, his complexion would assume the color of a peeled cucumber; "crow's feet" would gather round his eyes; the clump of hair over his forehead, which no brushing or pomatum could subdue, became rigid; his voice became husky, and he looked to be sixty. At other times, when the weather was bright, and business slack, and mutton-pies discarded, Mr. Dakins might be taken for forty. And on rare occasions when

his employer—Mr. Krell—was less crusty than usual, and on Saturdays, when Mr. Dakins would be picturing to himself the enjoyments of Sunday's rest and dinner, he would look quite youthful. But whatever may have been his age, there he stood at his desk, busily computing long rows of figures. At length the bells of a church clock rang nine, whereupon Mr. Dakins hurriedly pulled out a huge silver watch, secured by a black ribbon to his vest, and looking at it, exclaimed—"Bless my soul! I had no idea it was so late. And I have not yet finished this job, and Mr. Krell will be awfully impatient."

Hardly had Mr. Dakins finished this remark when a small door opposite the desk was opened, and a face presented itself. It was that of a man about sixty. His features were small and regular, and when viewed in profile had a hatchet-shaped appearance; his eyes were grey, cold and piercing; he had a Roman nose, and thin, firmly-set lips. The expression of his face indicated firmness, sagacity and caution, unmixed with humor or benevolence. Yet in spite of these characteristics, it