

TOM:—(*Thickly*)—You won't? All right—(*He starts for her*)—

RITA:—(*Wild with fright*)—Don' touch me—no—go back—please—keep away.—

TOM:—But dear—we love each other—

RITA:—Stop—!

TOM:—I won't!

RITA:—(*At bay against the wall*)—For-r God's sake—

TOM:—(*Close to her*)—Oh, my darling—

RITA:—(*Suddenly*)—All right. But first—please go an' lock dat door-r. (*A brief pause*)—

(*He walks unsteadily towards the door—right. As soon as his back is turned, Rita rushes to her pillow and draws out the pistol she placed there earlier in the act.*)—

TOM:—(*Turning and seeing*)—What have you got there?

RITA:—(*Wildly*)—De angel's veengs—I 'ear dem now—not lo-ve—but deat'—

TOM:—(*Holding out his hands*)—Give me that pistol!

RITA:—(*Standing in the entrance to her bed-room, the weapon at her temple, her eyes closed*)—De meenute dat I feel you touch me—I vill fir-re!

(*Pause. They are both breathing deeply. Tom, biting his underlip and never taking his eyes off her face, is crawling softly up on her other side—crouched like a beast—prepared to spring upon her unawares. Then, in the silence just as he is ready to leap—from quite near by is heard the first note of the midnight bell. The full deep tones strike solemnly and slowly, up to four. Then, as it continues, the sound of a brass band and a choir of men's voices—sturdy and sweet—are heard from far away, gradually growing nearer. They are playing and singing the old Lutheran Hymn, 'Ein feste Berg'. As Tom hears them, he gradually straightens and his old look and manner come back to him. He goes rather unsteadily to the window and opens it. Outside it is quite clear—the snow has stopped. The hymn grows louder and nearer. Other bells have begun to strike—some close, some far away. He stands for a moment looking out; then turns to Rita, passing his hand over his forehead as one recovering from a dream. She has opened her eyes; the hand holding the pistol hangs limply at her side. She looks at him in an agony of silent appeal*)—

TOM:—(*In his natural voice, very formal and polite, but a little constrained*)—I beg your pardon—I must take my leave—(*As he looks about for his hat*)—My church—the