

THE LETTER OF THE CONTRACT

volved others. We've let them involve themselves. We can't turn our back upon them, can we? No. I thought that's what you'd say. We can't. The contract we've made with them must come before the one we made with each other. We're bound, not only in law but in honor. Aren't we?"

He made some inarticulate sign of assent.

"And I suppose that's what he meant by the penalty—the penalty in its extreme form: that we've put ourselves where we can't keep the higher contract, the complete one, we made together—because we're bound by one lower and incomplete, to which we've got to be faithful. Isn't that the spirit *now*, don't you think?"

Again he muttered something inarticulately assenting.

"Well, then, Chip, I'm going." She rose with the words.

"No, no; not yet." He caught her hand in both of his, holding it as he leaned across the table.

"Yes, Chip, now. What do we gain by my staying? We see the thing we've got to do—and we must do it. We must begin on the instant. If I were to stay a minute longer now,