

PENALTY

be leaving her to drown; and, even though we can't give them happiness by standing by, yet it's some satisfaction just to *stand* by. Isn't that it? Isn't that the spirit?"

He withdrew his hand from hers to cover his eyes with it. He spoke hoarsely: "It may be. I—I think it is."

"But, *if* it is, then the spirit of the contract is different now from what it would have been—well, you know when. Then it meant that I should have stood by *you*—forgiven you, if that's the word—and shown myself truly your wife, for better or for worse. I didn't understand that. I only knew about the better. I didn't see that a man and a woman might take each other for worse—and still be true. If I had seen it—oh, what a happy woman I should have been to-day, and in all these years in which I haven't been happy at all! That was the spirit of the contract then, I suppose—but now it's different. It confuses me a little. Doesn't it confuse you?"

"Perhaps."

"Let me take your hand again; I can talk to you better like that. Now—*now*—we've undertaken new responsibilities. We've in-