

## THE CONVENTIONALISTS

to consider myself, watching Dick fingering Theo's photograph, and Chris, his head in his hands, leaning forward as his manner was, over the mantelpiece. We looked singularly unlike victors, I thought. Then, as I still meditated, there came the footsteps again, and the old man came in, grave, yet with suppressed radiance in his face.

"My wife thinks as I do," he said abruptly, "though it is a great shock, of course. But she would like to see you, gentlemen. Will you come this way?"

We rose and went after him. We passed through the ante-room, hearing as we did so the clink of tea-things from the hall opposite, and then turned aside through another door which the old man held open for us; and at any rate, as I came through, saw that something was going to happen.

It was that same room in which Algy had made his announcement a few months ago; but it was shuttered now and curtained. An ample woman sat upon the sofa opposite, beside the fire, with Algy's letter open in her lap, and behind her stood a girl; and, after one glance at the old lady I saw that it was not in her that the storm centre lay; though, during the following interview, I kept my eyes chiefly upon Mrs. Banister, yet my whole attention was given to the other.

How hard it is to describe an interior crisis which one witnesses in another person! Let me first give an account of Miss Maple, as I saw her now for the first time. I need not say that Dick's swiftly indrawn