

THE CONVENTIONALISTS

you are my guests for a time. You must take the consequences of coming at all on such an errand. It is this that I have to say. You shall not have what you want. It shall be stopped if there is justice in England. I shall write to my solicitors. All England shall hear of it. There shall be questions asked in the Houses of Parliament. Things like this are not so easily done nowadays. And as for you, gentlemen, who have tried to work this trick, I have no words that I can use. You have come down here trying to get me to take it quietly! Well, I will not take it quietly. It is an outrage. You have my answer, gentlemen. If you have no more to say, I will ask you to leave my house."

He sprang to his feet and stood there, a fine stalwart old man, a monument of splendid wrath and straightforwardness. And yet, though I shook with anger myself, I saw the pathos of the thing. It was so gallant and so stupid. I wondered whether we had been right in approaching him like this at all. Five minutes hence——!

Then Chris's voice broke in again, level and low.

"May I ask you to give us a few minutes more, Mr. Banister? We have not nearly done yet."

"I see no need."

"We have more to say, sir. A great deal more. Please sit down again, if you will be so kind."

The old man did not move.

I looked across at Chris. He too was as pale as ashes now; it was as if he were the culprit; and yet