

THE CONVENTIONALISTS

courteous : he hid the contempt, which I knew he felt for his poor brother, quite admirably.

Mr. Banister himself met us as we re-entered the garden—a fine sauntering figure of a man—and a few of the details had to be repeated for his benefit ; while Harold turned off in the direction of the house. I knew later why he had gone, when I met Sybil at dinner.

Dinner was as you may expect. We talked of everything under the sun except of what was in our minds. I had an excellent opportunity of studying the future mistress of Crowston, and I found her delightful. She was exceedingly pretty, wholesome, and well-behaved. In fact, it was almost my only opportunity, for she vanished when we came into the drawing-room afterwards, simultaneously with Harold, and I perceived them three minutes later in the garden that was now darkening beyond the windows. They made a splendid pair, and were radiantly happy.

I got a private word or two with Lady Brasted, under cover of some music contributed by one of the unimportant persons whose names I have forgotten.

“What is Miss Maple doing ?” I asked.

Lady Brasted put her head on one side. Then she shook it gently, like a swaying flower ; and a little touch of sharpness came into her face.

“Poor child,” she said, “she is abroad with her aunt.”

“I heard that she is not a Catholic after all ; and that she is engaged to be married.”