

THE CONVENTIONALISTS

be very much grieved, of course, as I am myself, at your news; but I must confess that all this makes a considerable difference. . . . Will you excuse me, gentlemen, for a few minutes? I will speak with her now. . . ." He glanced at the clock. "You have still an hour, I think. Will you excuse me?"

He hurried from the room.

(II)

The victory was won; that was certain. And yet I was conscious of a disagreeable sensation. It may sound priggish to say so, and yet it is a fact that one is always rather disappointed when a human being takes with alacrity a lower ground than he need. This Mr. Banister had emphatically done. If he had continued to insult us I should have wondered less. But his change from righteous indignation to incoherent complacency was an unpleasant argument on the cynic's side. It seemed that the property was what mattered—nothing else.

"I told you so," I said, rather gloomily to Chris.

Chris smiled pleasantly.

"My dear man, you were quite right and I was wrong. He had his chance, though, didn't he?"

"Oh! certainly he had his chance."

"I think it's a beastly shame," said Dick. "The whole thing took him by surprise."

Chris smiled again.

"Oh! I've no doubt he'd have been able to arrange