

THE CONVENTIONALISTS

left entirely to Mr. Banister's discretion, and that Harold would inherit.

I could see the old man almost step by step reconstructing his ideas. He showed it by his face and movements. His features resettled themselves; his lips moved a little in a kind of nervousness; and the hostility, though not the suspicion, began to die out of his face. Once he made a motion towards the letter that rested, conspicuously white, at the foot of a bronze nymph upon the mantelpiece; and, as Chris half rose to give it him, he motioned him back once more. When Chris finished, the other was himself again.

"I . . . I thank you very much, Mr. Dell. It is all very bewildering still to me. But . . . but I think it is clear enough. I understand you to say that there is to be no claim upon the property at all?"

"Just so."

"Then . . . then, gentlemen, I must confess I was wrong in my suspicions. . . I . . . beg to express my regret for what I said. . . . And . . . and my younger son will inherit?"

"Exactly."

Mr. Banister stood up; and we rose with him. He took the letter from the mantelpiece. His hand shook violently.

"This is all very surprising to me, gentlemen. Of course—of course there will be no trouble about the annuity. . . . But . . . but you must give me a little time. . . . I must talk with my wife. She will