

## THE CONVENTIONALISTS

"Poor boy!" he said abruptly, when the footsteps had died away; and he drew the last few rich breaths from his cigar. "But you say he is happy?"

"Very happy indeed," I answered.

"Well, well."

Heglanced across at Harold with infinite complacency, laying his cigar-end in the little tray at his elbow.

"Perhaps it's all for the best," he added. "You won't misunderstand me, Father Benson, when I say that he always was something like the fool of the family?"

"I understand perfectly," I said truthfully.

There was a pause. Then he glanced at the clock, sighed, rather too deliberately I thought, and pronounced the formula.

"Well—shall we be turning in?" he said.

I, too, glanced at the clock. It was on the stroke of the hour; and Algy at this moment, I knew, was entering the great church with his lantern. He had gone to bed as we went to dinner: now he was rising from his first sleep for his two or three hours' prayer, as we prepared to sleep. . . .

"With all my heart," I said, rising.