

THE CONVENTIONALISTS

heavy white habit, newly shaved on cheeks and head, looking strangely ageless and remote ; and I saw after a minute's conversation that that inexplicable veil, hanging always between the inner and the outer, was fallen between us. The experience at Esher had turned the boy into a man ; but it was more than manhood that had come to him here. It was as was said long ago, "Touch me not. . . ."

(Is this exaggerated ? I think it will not seem so to any who have talked with enclosed Religious. I am aware that this book is written with all the odds against it ; it deals with a hero who only comes into his own under circumstances which to most people appear the very heights of morbid folly. But I can only set down my impressions. Here was Algy, in one sense the same as he had always been, a natural and slightly clumsy young man ; in another sense entirely different. Few things are more dreary than dried seaweed ; and few things more delightful than seaweed in its proper element, alert and sensitive to its furthest fringe.)

He asked a few questions about his people, extremely quietly.

"I am going to Crowston to-day," I said. "They've asked me to stay the night."

"Give them my love," said Algy.

Then he asked whether the engagement between Harold and Sybil had been recognised.

"You know he'll make an excellent landlord," said Algy, smiling.