

blank bewilderment. His superior withheld any further information for the present.

'Everything in its turn,' the discreet Father resumed; 'the turn of explanation has not come yet. I have something else to shew you first. One of the most interesting relics in England. Look here.'

He unlocked a flat mahogany box, and displayed to view some writings on vellum, evidently of great age.

'You have had a little sermon already,' he said. 'You shall have a little story now. No doubt you have heard of Newstead Abbey—famous among the readers of poetry as the residence of Byron? King Henry treated Newstead exactly as he treated Vange Abbey? Many years since, the lake at Newstead was dragged, and the brass eagle which had served as the lectern in the old church was rescued from the waters in which it had lain for centuries. A secret receptacle was discovered in the body of the eagle, and the ancient title-deeds of the Abbey were found in it. The monks had taken that method of concealing the legal proofs of their rights and privileges, in the hope—a vain hope, I need hardly say—that a time might come when Justice would restore to them the property of which they had been robbed. Only last summer, one of our bishops, administering a northern diocese, spoke of these circumstances to a devout Catholic friend, and said he thought it possible that the precaution taken by the monks at Newstead might also have been taken by the monks at Vange. The friend, I should tell you, was an enthusiast. Saying nothing to the bishop (whose position and responsibilities he was bound to respect), he took into his confidence persons whom he could trust. One moonlight night—in the absence of the present proprietor, or I should rather say, the present usurper of the estate—the lake at Vange was privately dragged, with a result that proved the bishop's conjecture to be

right. Read those valuable documents, Arthur. Knowing your strict sense of honour, and your admirable tenderness of conscience, I wish you to be satisfied of the title of the Church to the lands of Vange, by evidence which is beyond dispute.'

With this little preface, he waited while Penrose read the title-deeds. 'Any doubt on your mind?' he asked, when the reading had come to an end.

'Not the shadow of a doubt.'

'Is the Church's right to the property clear?'

'As clear, Father, as words can make it.'

'Very good. We will lock up the documents. Arbitrary confiscation, Arthur, even on the part of a king, cannot override the law. What the Church once lawfully possessed, the Church has a right to recover. Any doubt about that in your mind?'

'Only the doubt of *how* the Church can recover. Is there anything in this particular case to be hoped from the law?'

'Nothing whatever.'

'And yet, Father, you speak as if you saw some prospect of the restitution of the property. By what means can the restitution be made?'

'By peaceful and worthy means,' Father Benwell answered. 'By honourable restoration of the confiscated property to the Church on the part of the person who is now in possession of it.'

Penrose was surprised and interested. 'Is the person a Catholic?' he asked, eagerly.

'Not yet.' Father Benwell laid a strong emphasis on those two little words. His fat fingers drummed restlessly on the table; his vigilant eyes rested expectantly on Penrose. 'Surely you understand me, Arthur?' he added, after an interval.

The colour rose slowly in the worn face of Penrose. 'I am afraid to understand you,' he said.

'Why?'

'I am not sure that it is my better