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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (S)

Government of Manipur

CLASS X

ENGLISH LITERATURE READER

CHAPTER 7 - THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

(NORMAN MCKINNEL)

NOTES

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

The Bishop – A kind hearted, godly person

The Convict – A hardened criminal, escaped from the prison

Persome – The Bishop's sister, very caring and loving as a sister

Marie - A maid servant in the Bishop's house

Sergeant – A police officer

SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

The play opens in the kitchen of the Bishop's cottage. It is 11 PM and the Bishop has not yet come home. Persome and Marie are having a conversation regarding the Bishop. Persome shows deep concern for her brother. She feels he is overstraining himself. Marie tells her that the Bishop has sold his silver salt cellars to help a poor old woman. Persome is shocked.

The Bishop arrives. He had gone to attend Marie's ailing mother. As soon as he arrives, he sends Marie away and gives her his comforter to protect herself from the biting cold outside. Marie goes away. Persome scolds her brother for giving away his comforter to Marie. She also remarks that he will give away his proud possession, a massive silver candlestick, a gift from his dying mother. This gives him an idea that he can use them to help a needy person someday.



Persome retires to her room for the night. The Bishop sits down to read. Soon the convict enters stealthily with a long knife in his hand and he demands something to eat as he has not eaten for the last three days. He also threatened to kill him if the Bishop raises an alarm. The Bishop is not frightened at all. He feels true sympathy and pity for the man. The Bishop gives the convict some bread, meat and wine to drink. The convict feels convinced that the Bishop will not hand him over to the police.

The Bishop engages him in a conversation. The convict tells him that he has been a victim of circumstances, a callous society and cruel law. Once he had to steal to buy food for his starving wife. He was caught and imprisoned. His wife died the night he was put into prison. There he lived a life of hell and turned into a hardened criminal.

The Bishop consoles the convict and asks him to sleep for the night. The Bishop goes to his room. The convict is left alone. His eyes fall on the Bishop's candlesticks. He steals them and walks out cautiously hiding the candlesticks under his coat. As he goes out the door slams. Persome hears the noise and comes running. She finds that the convict has run away with the candlesticks. She raises an alarm. The Bishop comes and is shocked to know that the convict has stolen the candlesticks but soon console himself, saying that he has more need of them than him. Just then a sergeant comes with the convict in chains, carrying the candlesticks. But the Bishop saves the convict and transforms him to be a good person.
