

THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

A Play in One Act

by
Pauline Phelps



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THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS
A Play in One Act

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Based on an incident in "Les Miserables", by Victor Hugo.

CHARACTERS: (As they speak)

MADemoiselle BAPTISTINE ("Bappie"), the Bishop's sister.

MADAME MACGLOIRE (Clotilde), the housekeeper.

MONSEIGNEUR BIENVENU, the Bishop.

JEAN VALJEAN, the convict.

THE CAPTAIN OF POLICE.

PLACE: A small town in the mountainous region of France in the early part of the Nineteenth Century.

TIME: Early evening. Lights on.

SCENE: The Bishop's sitting-room. Door down L. opens into kitchen and other parts of the house. Door up L. into the Bishop's study and bedroom. Outside door, up R. Window, which need not be practical, down R. The room is comfortably, but very plainly furnished. At L. C. is a small supper table set for one, with white cloth and rather ordinary dishes. A straight chair is drawn close to this table, with a similar chair to right of it. Between the two doors at L. is a sideboard with drawers, one containing bed linen, the other, extra dishes. On top of the sideboard are candles in massive silver candlesticks, with a Bible between them. Against the back wall, R. C., stands a rather shabby, but comfortable, couch. Between door and window R. is a tiny table with a lighted lamp upon it, and to left of this, Baptistine's embroidery frame, with chair in front of it. Down C. is the Bishop's armchair covered with faded upholstery. There is also a chair near the sideboard at L.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS:

BAPPIE: A woman of fifty, gentle, slender, frail, and unmistakably an aristocrat. Her slightly graying hair is elaborately combed high on her head, in the fashion of the early Nineteenth Century portraits. Her dress is a sober-colored silk with a high waist, a narrow sheath-like skirt, and puffed-sleeves with flaps and buttons. Bappie speaks quietly in a clear-cut cultivated voice.

CLOTILDE: Although she has been in the Bishop's family for thirty years and is treated almost as one of them, Clotilde still has the air of a peasant. She is short and stout, with red cheeks and white hair, and has a habit of becoming violently excited over trifles. She wears a short dress of dark woolen stuff with full sleeves, coarse shoes and white stockings. Her bib apron of red and green cotton is knotted around the waist with a green ribbon. A gold cross is suspended from a velvet ribbon on her neck, popping out from a very white fichu. On her head is a white quilted cap. When she first appears, the above costume is augmented by a long, dark cape, with an attached hood of the same material.

THE BISHOP: In the early sixties, plump, rather short and with a gentle, unassuming manner. His face is clean-shaven, and his hair snow white. He has a quiet sense of humor, combined with a deep

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affection for all mankind. On entering, he wears a broad-brimmed hat and a long coat over a very shabby, plain black suit. A black skull cap is in the pocket of his inner coat.

JEAN VALJEAN: A man of about forty-five, giving the appearance of great physical strength. He has a long beard and at his initial entrance, a cap with leather visor partly conceals his face. His shirt is coarse, unbleached linen, open at the throat, and his neck cloth is twisted into a rope. He wears worn and tattered blue cotton overalls, a ragged smock of gray cotton with patch at one elbow sewed on with heavy twine, and coarse shoes worn through at the toes. Over his shoulder is slung an old knapsack, and half-concealed in his hand he carries a huge knotty stick. His whole appearance should be sinister and terrifying.

CAPTAIN OF POLICE: Between twenty-five and thirty, quick-witted and alert. Policeman's uniform, and he may carry either a long old-fashioned musket or a heavy club.

PROPERTY PLOT:

Skeins of silk	(Bappie)	(At the frame)
Needle and thread.	(Bappie)	(At table R.)
Vinaigrette.	(Clotilde)	(In pocket)
Skull cap.	(Bishop)	(In inner coat pocket)
Yellow paper passport	(Valjean)	(In pocket)
Tureen of soup, bread and soup plate.	(Clotilde)	(Carries in)
Cudgel and knapsack.	(Valjean)	(Carries in)
Dishes, knife, fork and large sharp knife.		(In sideboard drawer)
Linen.		(In sideboard drawer)
Tray with food, glass of wine.	(Bishop)	(Carries in)
Lighted candle.	(Bappie)	(Carries in)
Cords to tie the Convict's hands.		(Worn in)

(DISCOVERED: Bappie, embroidering at the frame. She holds a skein of silk against the cloth to match it. Starts to thread her needle.) (Clotilde, very much excited, bursts in from up R.)

CLOTILDE: (Breathlessly) Mademoiselle, my mistress!

BAPPIE: (Quietly, as one used to the vagaries of her maid.) Yes, Clotilde, what is it?

CLO.: Has your brother, the Bishop, returned?

BAP.: No, although I have been expecting him for an hour.

CLO.: (Wringing her hands.) Alas, you will never see the good man again, for he is murdered!

BAP.: (Rises to her feet, staring at Clotilde incredulously.) Who would murder the Bishop whom everybody loves?

CLO.: A wicked, wicked convict, just released after serving nineteen years in the galleys.

BAP.: I cannot believe it! (Looks at Clotilde's agonized face and is convinced. Speaks piteously.) My brother--my dear, dear Henri, all I have in the world. (Presses her hand to her heart, with an exclamation of pain.) Ah! (Sways)

CLO.: (Rushes to support her.) Don't faint! For the love of God, don't faint. Take a sniff of this vinaigrette. (Takes vinaigrette from her pocket and forces it into Bappie's hand.) After all, I spoke hastily when I said the Bishop was murdered. It may not be altogether true.

BAP.: (Faintly, though somewhat relieved by the vinaigrette) Then what, in heaven's name, IS true?

CLO.: (Beginning to feel ashamed of herself) The convict may have only HALF murdered him--

BAP.: And then left him to suffer? That is worse than his dying outright. (Sways again)

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CLO.: (Hysterically) Another whiff of smelling salts! (Snatches the bottle from Bappie's hand, and holds it under her nose.) Even if it strangles you, it will help. (As Bappie, coughing, sits upon sofa) Mon Dieu, why need you take all I say as though it were straight from the gospel? I have worked for you for thirty years. You should know by this time that I am a very excitable woman.

BAP.: Speak quickly! Tell me the truth--but only the truth.

CLO.: Mademoiselle, there is roaming about the street tonight an ex-convict, with the strength of a Samson and the temper of a devil. He carries an enormous cudgel, and the innkeeper told me one had only to look in his face to see murder there.

BAP.: And has this frightful creature attacked my brother?

CLO.: It may be, though I could not swear to it.

BAP.: (Becoming indignant) Have the two even met?

CLO.: (Nervously) That is not impossible, since they are both in the same town.

BAP.: (Rises) In other words, you know nothing, and had no right to give me all this unhappiness. Take back your vinaigrette. If I were not a kindhearted woman and the sister of a Bishop, I would order you to take ten whiffs of it yourself, and then laugh to see you gasping for breath.

CLO.: Your pardon, Mademoiselle. It is only my great affection for your brother that causes my thoughts to run wild and picture all the terrible things that may happen. (Removes her coat as she talks) And I still say, as long as the convict is at large in the street, and the Bishop also at large--

Bishop enters from up R.

BISHOP: Good evening, my sister and Clotilde.

CLO.: Ah, the good Bishop, he is safe!

BISHOP: Safe as all should be who put their trust in God. (Takes off coat and hat, which he hands to Clotilde. He then sits in chair R. C., takes skull cap from his pocket and puts it on.) There is a hint of snow in the air tonight. It is good to rest in warmth and comfort.

BAP.: Clotilde, bring in the soup and meat for my brother.

BISHOP: (As Clotilde starts toward door, down L.) You are not dining with me?

BAP.: I have already eaten, being anxious to finish embroidering my altar cloth.

BISHOP: (To Clotilde) Then soup will be sufficient. I'll have no meat tonight. (Clotilde exits, down L.)

BAP.: No meat when there is a fine, juicy roast which we have kept waiting for you?

BISHOP: That can be saved until Sunday.

BAP.: On Sunday we are to entertain the Mayor, and I had planned to give him sweetbreads.

BISHOP: (With a whimsical smile) Our mayor is growing corpulent, and sweetbreads are too fattening. Moreover, for this month they are entirely beyond my means, as only two centimes remain in my pocket. (Turns the pocket of his coat inside out to prove it.)

Clotilde who has placed bread and a soup plate upon the table, now enters carrying in both hands a large tureen of soup.

BAP.: (With humorous resignation) Clotilde, my brother has again thrown his money to the poor, saving hardly enough to buy us food. Charity is a vice with him, like a taste for liquor in some others.

CLO.: (Having placed the soup upon the table, addresses the bishop with great ceremony.) Dinner is served. (The Bishop rises and goes to the table.) Mademoiselle, have I your permission to speak to him about the convict?

Bappie nods in assent.

BISHOP: What convict? (As he helps himself to soup) Who is he, and where does he come from?

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CLO.: (Volubly, delighted at the chance of being heard) I do not know his name, but he was seen to arrive by the boulevard and wander about in the gloaming. The Prefect has given warning that we shall all fasten our doors because of him. And I say, and Mademoiselle, your sister, says with me--

BAP.: I say nothing. My brother's wish is my law.

CLO.: (Stubbornly, disregarding the interruption) We say this house is not safe at all. If Monseigneur permits, I will go now and tell the locksmith to replace the ancient locks that you ordered taken off when we came here. Then we need no longer fear this villain convict who has been turned away from both our inns, turned away from a peasant's cottage, turned away, even, from the jail where he begged for a lodging.

BISHOP: So that now the poor man has no place to sleep tonight!

CLO.: (Indignantly) Poor man, indeed! For the sake of the silver in those candlesticks, he would cut all our throats. Yet there you sit, in a room without bolts, as serene as though we had a force of police to guard us. (Becomes more excited as she continues) More than that, I venture to say that you will take no precautions. Should a knock be heard at the door, you would, as usual, without even looking from the window to see who it is call out--

There is a very loud knock at the door up R.

BISHOP: (Instantly, speaking as if from force of habit.) Come in.

Enter Jean Valjean. Closing the door behind him, he leans against it, and cudgel in hand, surveys, those in the room with a fierce and angry expression.

CLO.: (Scared half out of her wits gives her usual scream of terror.) Oo-oo! The convict! (Retreating to left, she stands gazing at him, her hands over her mouth.)

Bappie shudders, but remains silent. The Bishop's tranquil expression does not change.

BISHOP: Good evening, sir. To what do I owe the honor of this visit?

VALJEAN: (In a rough, strident voice) "The honor"? And you call me "sir"! Your words make me laugh--I who have not laughed for years. Can't you see for yourself the kind of man I am?

BISHOP: Clotilde, set another place. Since my sister has already eaten, this gentleman perhaps join me at the table.

With obvious reluctance, Clotilde, during the convict's next speech, takes dishes, knife and fork from the sideboard drawer and places them on the table. She also moves up the small chair.

VAL.: (Advances and stands close beside the Bishop) Look you, this is what is written upon my passport. (Takes from his pocket a yellow paper, and reads) "Jean Valjean, discharged convict. Native of Toulon. Has been nineteen years in the galleys. He is a very dangerous man." (Fiercely, crumpling the paper and cramming it back into his pocket) Did you hear? "A very dangerous man."

BISHOP: (As though Valjean had not spoken) The table is ready. (Indicates chair at his left) Please oblige me by sitting down. (Serves soup)

VAL.: (Stammeringly) You mean it--you MEAN that I am to eat with you? (Places cudgel on the floor, sits, grabs a piece of bread and stuffs it into his mouth. Takes up the dish of soup and drinks ravenously from it, puts it down and looks rather shamefacedly at the Bishop.) Your pardon, but I could not wait. I'm on the verge of starvation. No one will give me food or shelter because of that yellow passport, and I've walked for four days since I left Toulon. (Again eats, this time using a spoon for his soup)

BISHOP: Clotilde, soup is not enough for a man who has tramped rough roads so long. Bring in the roast.

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VAL: (Springing to his feet, as Clothilde starts to obey) Stop! Come back. (Clotilde, frightened, stands motionless. He addresses the Bishop) I see your trick. You are afraid to turn me out by yourself, and think she will bring help. THAT WOMAN STAYS HERE.

BISHOP: (Very quietly) Then will you trust ME to go into the kitchen for the roast?

VAL: (For a moment stares into the Bishop's mild blue eyes with the wildness of a trapped dog. Then his mood changes, and he answers in a stifled voice) Yes, I trust you. I don't know why, but I do.

BISHOP: Clotilde, bring linen and make a bed on the sofa. Our guest remains with us tonight.

He exits down L. Clotilde, with ill-grace, brings the linen from the sideboard, and during the next speeches, arranges the bed.

VAL.: (Addressing Bappie) Is that man who has just left, the keeper of this inn?

BAP.: He is a priest, who lives here.

VAL.: Well, I am a fool, that I did not guess that when I saw his skull cap. A poor priest--for his clothes are very shabby, I noticed that. It is the high and mighty of the church, curse them, who live in splendor while the poor are left to starve. When I passed the Bishop's fine house tonight, standing next to the Cathedral, I shook my fist at it.

BAP.: Then you shook your fist at the hospital, since the bishop has given up his house to the poor and sick.

VAL.: If a Bishop did that, it was for some selfish purpose of his own. I know Bishops. Once we had one at the prison. He wore a pointed thing on his head. It glittered in the bright light of day. We could not see very well. He spoke--but we did not hear. The room was crowded with miserable convicts. He looked at us and SMILED, and went away and never came back. (Bitterly) That is what a Bishop is like.

Enter from down L. the Bishop, carrying a tray on which are several dishes of food. His face is beaming with innocent satisfaction.

BISHOP: A plate of meat--a pastry,--even a glass of wine. For an old man with clumsy fingers, I think I think I've done fairly well.

CLO.: (Rushing to relieve him of his tray) But if anyone hears of it, there will be a scandal in the town. It is disgraceful for a Bishop to wait upon a convict.

VAL.: (As the Bishop returns to the table) YOU are not a Bishop? It is not YOU who gave your house as a hospital for the sick?

BAP.: Not only that, but many other things--furniture, silver, jewels. Truly a peasant who tills the fields is no poorer than my brother.

VAL.: (Puzzled) I cannot imagine a Bishop renouncing his wealth. (Looks about, speaks triumphantly) But you have not renounced it all. There upon that sideboard are fine, large candlesticks.

BAP.: Heirlooms, which have been in our family for hundreds of years.

BISHOP: When a man of our name dies, it is the custom to place the candles upon his bier to light his path toward Heaven.

VAL.: (In a surly manner, as he raises the glass of wine) Do you believe in Heaven?

BISHOP: Yes, for sometimes when I have prayed, my soul has been wafted there.

Bappie and Clotilde sit together upon the couch, at back.

VAL.: And I believe in hell, because for nineteen years I have lived in it. A ball on the ankle, a plank to sleep upon. Heat--cold--toil--beatings. The double chain for nothing, the cell for one word. Even sick in bed, still the chain. Dogs--dogs are happier.

BISHOP: My friend, what desperate crime did you commit to bring about such terrible punishment?

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VAL.: I stole a loaf of bread. (As the Bishop looks incredulous) Don't shake your head. I swear to you that was all--Save that before my three years in the galleys were ended, I felt my soul drying within me and tried to escape to save it. And they brought me back and doubled my sentence. More escapes--three of them. More lashings, and starvation, and days spent in the black cell. (With heartbreaking pathos) Until, at last--my soul--died.

BISHOP: A soul cannot die, since God has given it eternal life.

VAL.: (Rudely, pushing back his chair from the table) Old man, I say my soul is dead, and in its place is hate for all mankind--even for you, who has given me this food. (Laughs) It was wise that

you did. This cudgel is heavy enough to crush your head with a single blow, and when I came up those stairs, I had determined to use it.

CLO.: (Using her favorite exclamation) Ow-ow! I said he would murder us all.

BISHOP: (Composedly) Clotilde, you may clear the table, since our guest seems to have finished his meal. This speech seems to bring Jean Valjean to his senses. He passes his hand over his forehead, puts down cudgel, then speaks quietly.

VAL.: Yes, for the first time in nineteen years, I've eaten and drunk my fill. But the wine upset my judgment, and I've talked far more than I should. (He moves his chair to left of room and sits in it. Bappie goes to her embroidery frame, while Clotilde piles the dishes upon the tray and folds the tablecloth.)

BISHOP: (Crosses to right, and addresses Bappie) My sister, Jean Valjean must be very tired. It is time that you bade us good-night.

BAP.: (Appealingly, in an undertone) Do you realize that if you are left alone with this violent ran, he may take your life?

BISHOP: (With a smile) That is the good God's business.

With no further remonstrance, Bappie crosses room to left.

CLO.: (At table) Monseigneur the Bishop, shall I not remove these valuable candlesticks into another room?

BISHOP: No, leave them in their usual place.

CLO.: (Carrying tray and tablecloth, turns at door down L. and curtsies) Good-night, Monseigneur Bishop.

BISHOP: Good-night, and pleasant dreams.

BAP.: Good-night, dear Henri.

BISHOP: Good-night, Bappie. As you rest, may you draw near to heaven. (Bappie exits, down L. The Bishop returns to Valjean) Sir, it is my custom to spend an hour in prayer and meditation before retiring, and we shall not meet again until morning. If you wish, you may leave the lamp burning through the night. (Raises his hand) Jean Valjean, I give you my blessing. (Valjean stands erect, gazing at him defiantly) You do not kneel for it?

VAL.: I kneel to no man.

BISHOP: When the Church blesses, it is the good God to whom you kneel.

VAL.: (Still defiant) To God, least of all.

BISHOP: (Quietly) Tomorrow you may feel differently about many things, for I will pray that your soul awakens in the night. (He exits, up L.)

Valjean gazes after him, follows him to the door, comes back.

VAL.: The foolish old fellow has gone to pray, leaving me with his precious candlesticks. (Picks them up from sideboard) He thinks I will return good for good, but a man with no soul returns good with evil. (Hastily unstraps knapsack, puts candlesticks in it, straps it again, picks up his

cudgel) The Bishop promised I would be undisturbed until morning. (Starts toward door tip R., looks at the sofa, and is struck by a new thought) Though should that rabbit of a serving maid decide to open the door a crack, to see if I am really sleeping--(Deftly arranges the blankets on sofa to give the impression that someone is in bed. Nods in satisfaction) That's better. (Gives a glance toward door up L.) Good-night, Bishop. Keep on praying for my soul. (Exits up R.)

There is a timid tap at door down L., repeated after a moment's pause.

BAP.: (Speaking from off stage, down L.) May I come in for a moment, Henri? There is something you should hear. (She enters, carrying a candle, and stands just inside the door) Henri? (Listens) Ah, he is at prayer. (Goes to door up L., and again knocks)

BISHOP: (From his chamber) Who is it?

BAP.: Your sister Bappie. (The Bishop enters, and comes a few steps into the room) Henri, I crave your pardon for forgetting that the woman who keeps the fish-market on the next street came early this evening to say that her sick child was no better, and that she desired your heavenly intercession for him. As soon as I remembered her message, I felt I must, even at the risk of disturbing your guest--

BISHOP: (With a smiling glance at the couch) He is sleeping too soundly to be disturbed. Thank you, dear sister, for bringing me word of the child.

BAP.: And thank you, brother, for overlooking my negligence. (Turns to go, speaks--in a frightened whisper) Henri, where are your candlesticks?

Enter Clotilde, from down L., and stands near door.

BISHOP: My candlesticks? (Looks at the sideboard and is perplexed) Clotilde must have taken them away.

CLO.: No, they were here when I left the room. If that convict were not lying on the sofa there-- (Suddenly rushes across the room, seizes the blankets and turns them down) Monseigneur, the bed is empty! The blankets were only a trick to deceive us.

BAP.: He must have fled while my brother was at prayer.

BISHOP: What madness to think he could escape. Before he even reaches the outskirts of the town, the police will have him in custody.

BAP.: (Looks out of window) Brother, you have spoken the truth. He is captured already.

CLO.: Is such good news possible? Why, he could hardly have reached the street. (Rushes to the window) Yes, under the lamplight I see plainly that wicked ingrate, being marched along by three of the police.

The Bishop rises, crosses to left and stands facing left, with his hands clasped and his eyes uplifted.

BISHOP: Dear God, show me what I can do to save this man. (He continues to stand in attitude of prayer, though without further audible words)

CLO.: They have turned in at the gate, and are coning up the walk.

BAP.: They wish, no doubt, that my brother should identify the candlesticks before they lock up the thief.

CLO.: (Triumphantly) From now on he'll trouble his betters no more. When a convict is convicted of a second crime, it means imprisonment for life.

BISHOP: Clotilde, I do not wish you here when these men arrive. Go back to your chamber.

CLO.: (Much disappointed) But, Monseigneur--(Meekly, as the Bishop eyes her sternly) I am only a humble servant, and I obey. (Crosses to down L.)

BISHOP: (Shaking an admonitory finger) And mind you, you are not to listen at the door outside.

CLO.: (Meekly) No, sir. (Drops a curtsey, turns for a last word) Though even a Bishop might take some pity on a woman's curiosity. (Exits down L.)

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BISHOP: (Turning to his sister) The time is short and there is a man to be saved from hell. I am your brother, but I am a Bishop, also. If your Bishop asked you to tell a few grievous lies, would you have the strength to do it?

BAP.: I think so, Brother.

BISHOP: Then whatever I desire you to say to the police, say it, and without hesitation. Promise me to do this.

BAP.: I promise.

BISHOP: (Again raising his eyes) And may I be governed to act my part well. (Knock at the door up R.)
Come in.

Enter the Captain of Police, carrying the Bishop's candlesticks.

CAPTAIN: Good evening, Monseigneur Bishop. I am the Captain of Police in this city. I have outside a desperate criminal, in the custody of two gendarmes.

BISHOP: Captain, you are welcome, but kindly allow the criminal and the two gendarmes to remain outside. My sister has weak nerves, and would be terrified at the sight of the malefactor.

CAP.: As you will, Monseigneur Bishop. (To his subordinates outside) Watch the fellow well. (Closes the door) Though he can't do any harm now, bound as he is.

BISHOP: He has perhaps, killed a man?

CAP.: We gave him no chance for that. Hardly three minutes ago I saw the villain skulking out of your yard, and stole up and felled him by a blow from behind. No sooner had he fallen than my gendarmes were upon him, clubbing him almost into insensibility.

BISHOP: Without knowing whether he had committed a crime or not?

CAP.: When we searched his knapsack, we found in it these candlesticks, undoubtedly stolen from your house.

BISHOP: (Apparently horrified) You have arrested this man for having in his possession my silver candlesticks, when--(Opens door up R. and speaks to the police outside) Let your prisoner enter at once. I'll be responsible for him. (Jean Valjean enters, his hands bound behind him, his cap low over his eyes, and a trickle of blood on his cheek. The Bishop rushes to him, places his hands affectionately on the convict's shoulders) Alas, my dear Jean, what a frightful mistake! Let me unbind these cords. (He pulls Valjean to left of stage, takes knife from drawer of sideboard and standing behind him, proceeds to cut the ropes)

CAP.: (Sternly) Do you know this man?

BISHOP: (Busy at his task) Tell him, Sister that he is our relative from Toulon, who left our home gaily not ten minutes ago.

CAP.: (Doubtingly) He is very ragged to be the relative of a Bishop.

BISHOP: Bappie, explain to the Captain that Jean is on a walking tour, and assumed a beggar's disguise for safety in passing through a wild country.

BAP.: He assumed a disguise for safety.

CAP.: But how did he come by your heirloom candlesticks?

BISHOP: (To Bappie) Is it not true that we made him a present of them, as a mark of our affection and esteem?

BAP.: (Steadily) It is true.

CAP.: (Defensively) The culprit said nothing of all this when we arrested him.

BISHOP: Club a man over the head, and he temporarily takes leave of his senses.

VAL.: (Raising his eyes for the first time) It is so. Until now, I've been in a daze.

BISHOP: Captain, you will, of course, release our relative from arrest.

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- CAP.: (Respectfully, but with a certain dogged pugnaciousness) Monseigneur, I know that you're a devout man.
- BISHOP: At least, I humbly try to be.
- CAP.: I know that falsehood is abhorrent to you.
- BISHOP: Truly a lie is one of the devil's intentions.
- CAP.: In this interview I have noticed that you put words into your sister's mouth instead of saying them for yourself. Can this be because you, as a Bishop, may give your sister absolution from a falsehood, whereas a Bishop can obtain it only by much fasting and long delay? (As the Bishop gazes at him, smiling) Why do you smile as you look at me?
- BISHOP: I am thinking that the Captain of Police must be a very clever man to invent such an ingenious theory.
- CAP.: Then, if it is only a theory, would Monseigneur the Bishop object to placing his hand upon the Bible yonder, while he answers a question?
- BISHOP: (Takes the book from the sideboard, holds it in his left hand, places his right hand over it) My hand is on the book.
- CAP.: You have spoken of my prisoner as your relative. Will you now take oath as to the exact relationship?
- BISHOP: (Simply and convincingly) I swear upon the Bible that this man is my brother.
- CAP.: (Stammeringly, all his assurance gone) M'sieur le Bishop, pardon me that I did not know--I should have waited--I should have questioned him before I struck. (To Valjean) Sir, I beg of you that you will not make trouble for me by reporting this regrettable incident to those higher up.
- BISHOP: He will not, so long as you leave us now in peace.
- CAP.: A thousand thanks for such clemency. (To Valjean) Good evening, sir. (Bows to the Bishop) Good evening, Monseigneur the Bishop. (Goes toward door tip R., turns for a last look) Brothers, you two. Oh, now I see plainly the resemblance. (Exits, up R.)
- BISHOP: Jean Valjean, sit down and rest.
- VAL.: (Despairingly, as he drops into chair at C.) You have done all this for me, but it is useless. How can I live an honest life, when my yellow passport makes me an outlaw?
- BISHOP: In the mountains to the north lies the fertile region of Fontarlier, the cheese country, where there is work for any laborer with such strength as yours. Tomorrow you will start on your journey, clothed in a decent suit. In your knapsack you will carry two silver candlesticks, with a line on them in my own writing, saying they were given you by Bishop Bienvenu, of the town of D. I am known throughout the whole Fontarlier country. When the cheesemakers behold this evidence of my esteem, (hands him the candlesticks) they will never trouble to ask for your passport.
- VAL.: (Rises, trembling, hardly able to believe in his good fortune) You are GIVING me--your beloved candlesticks?
- BISHOP: Not GIVING, for it is your awakened soul I ask in exchange for them. I withdraw it from black thoughts and the spirit of perdition, and I offer it to God.
- VAL.: But will God, who calls on all His followers to speak the truth, pardon the lie you told to save me from the gallows?
- BISHOP: I told no lie. In the eyes of the world, you are a convict and I a Bishop. But God sees us both as his children, and therefore, we are brothers.

Valjean kneels involuntarily. Bappie, rising, stands with bowed head, and the Bishop raises his hand and blesses the convict, as the curtain falls.

*****WDB*****