

# NINE MODERN PLAYS

Selected and Edited by  
JOHN HAMPDEN

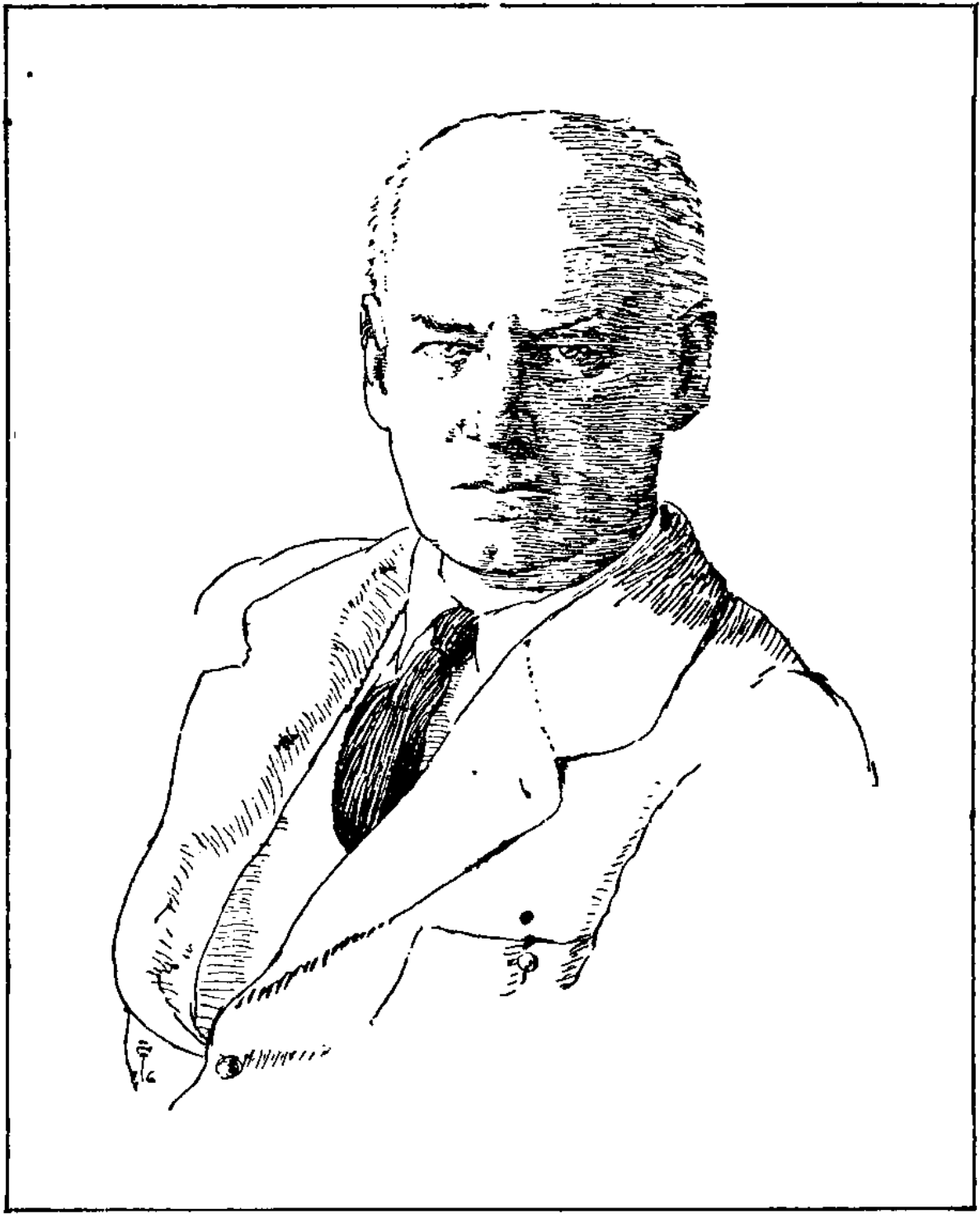


*The "Teaching of English" Series*

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*General Editor*—DR. RICHARD WILSON

## NINE MODERN PLAYS



JOHN GALSWORTHY

*From a pen-drawing by  
E. Heber Thompson*

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*By the same Editor.*

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# NINE MODERN PLAYS

## PREFACE

THE aim of this little volume is to present a varied collection of modern one-act plays, ranging from tragedy to farce, which will appeal to the upper forms of secondary and continuation schools, to play-reading circles, and to all who are interested in drama. The plays have been chosen as particularly suitable, not only for reading and study, but for amateur production by players young or old, and all except two are very simple to stage.

The editor wishes to express his thanks to the following authors and publishers for permission to include their plays in this book :

Mr. Norman McKinnel and Messrs. Samuel French for *The Bishop's Candlesticks* ; the representatives of the late Harold Chapin and Messrs. Gowans and Gray, the publishers of the play as a separate booklet, for *The Philosopher of Butterbiggins* ; the Honourable Maurice Baring and Messrs. W. Heinemann, Ltd., for *The Rehearsal* ; Mr. Harold Brighouse for the manuscript of *The Price of Coal*, as well as to Messrs. Gowans and Gray who publish the Lanarkshire version of the play separately ; Mrs. Flebbe (Miss B. M. Dix) and Messrs. Henry Holt and Co. for *Allison's Lad* ; Mr. Bernard Gilbert and Messrs. Samuel French for *The Old Bull* ; Mr. John Galsworthy and Messrs. Duckworth and Co., Ltd., for *The Little Man* ; Mr. Clifford Bax and Messrs. Henderson for *The Poetasters of Ispahan* ; and the owners of the copy-



right and Messrs. Allen and Unwin for *Riders to the Sea*, by J. M. Synge.\*

The editor also desires to acknowledge gratefully his indebtedness to Dr. Richard Wilson, for endless patience in the business of copyright arrangements ; to the invaluable lending libraries of the British Drama League and the Village Drama Society, without which the task of selecting the plays would have been much more difficult ; and to his wife, for constant help and criticism in this as in so many other enterprises.

J. H.

\* Messrs. Allen and Unwin also publish the following plays by the same author : *The Shadow of the Glen*, *The Well of the Saints*, *The Tinker's Wedding*, *The Playboy of the Western World*. *Deirdre of the Sorrows*.

Application for leave to act these plays in public must be made as follows :

1. For *Riders to the Sea* by J. M. Synge, *The Bishop's Candlesticks* by N. McKinnel, *The Philosopher of Butterbiggins* by H. Chapin, *The Price of Coal* by H. Brighthouse, and *The Old Bull* by B. Gilbert, to Messrs. Samuel French, 26 Southampton Street, London, W.C.2.

2. For *The Poetasters of Ispahan* by Clifford Bax, to Mr. A. D. Peters, 4-5 Adam Street, Adelphi, London, W.C.2.

3. For *The Little Man* by John Galsworthy, and *The Rehearsal* by M. Baring, to The Collection Bureau, The Society of Authors, 11 Gower Street, London, W.C.1.

4. For *Allison's Lad* by B. M. Dix, to Mr. R. Golding Bright, 20 Green Street, Leicester Square, London, W.C.2.

For further information regarding acting fees, see pages 229 *et seq.* of this book.

# THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

BY NORMAN MCKINNEL

Originally produced at the Duke of York's Theatre on August 24, 1901, with the following cast :

THE BISHOP . . . . .	Mr. A. E. George.
THE CONVICT . . . . .	Mr. Norman McKinnel.
PERSOMÉ ( <i>the Bishop's sister, a widow</i> ) . . . . .	Miss Nannie Griffin.
MARIE . . . . .	Miss Constance Walton.
SERGEANT OF GENDARMES . . . . .	Mr. Frank Woolfe.

It was revived at the Kingsway Theatre on Friday December 20, 1907, with the following cast :

THE BISHOP . . . . .	Mr. Henry Vibart.
THE CONVICT . . . . .	Mr. Lemmon Warde.
PERSOMÉ . . . . .	Miss Evelyn Hall.
MARIE . . . . .	Miss Maud Stewart.
SERGEANT OF GENDARMES . . . . .	Mr. Douglas Gordon.

TIME.—The beginning of the nineteenth century.

PLACE.—France, about thirty miles from Paris.

## THE BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS

SCENE.—*The kitchen of the BISHOP'S cottage. It is plainly but substantially furnished. Doors R. and L. and L. C. Window R. C. Fireplace with heavy mantelpiece down R. Oak settle with cushions behind door L. C. Table in window R. C. with writing materials and crucifix (wood). Eight-day clock R. of window. Kitchen dresser, with cupboard to lock, down L. Oak dining-table R. C. Chairs, books, etc. Winter wood scene without. On the mantelpiece are two very handsome candlesticks, which look strangely out of place with their surroundings.*

[MARIE and PERSOMÉ discovered. MARIE stirring some soup on the fire. PERSOMÉ laying the cloth, etc.]

*Persomé.* Marie, isn't the soup boiling yet?

*Marie.* Not yet, Madam.

*Persomé.* Well, it ought to be. You haven't tended the fire properly, child.

*Marie.* But, Madam, you yourself made the fire up.

*Persomé.* Don't answer me back like that. It is rude.

*Marie.* Yes, Madam.

*Persomé.* Then don't let me have to rebuke you again.

*Marie.* No, Madam.

*Persomé.* I wonder where my brother can be. [Looking at the clock] It is after eleven o'clock and no sign of him. Marie!

*Marie.* Yes, Madam.

*Persomé.* Did Monseigneur the Bishop leave any message for me?

*Marie.* No, Madam.

*Persomé.* Did he tell you where he was going ?

*Marie.* Yes, Madam.

*Persomé* [*imitating*]. "Yes, Madam." Then why haven't you told me, stupid !

*Marie.* Madam didn't ask me.

*Persomé.* But that is no reason for your not telling me, is it ?

*Marie.* Madam said only this morning I was not to chatter, so I thought——

*Persomé.* Ah, mon Dieu, you thought ! Ah ! it is hopeless.

*Marie.* Yes, Madam.

*Persomé.* Don't keep saying "Yes, Madam," like a parrot, nincompoop.

*Marie.* No, Madam.

*Persomé.* Well, where did Monseigneur say he was going ?

*Marie.* To my mother's, Madam.

*Persomé.* To your mother's indeed ! And why, pray ?

*Marie.* Monseigneur asked me how she was, and I told him she was feeling poorly.

*Persomé.* You told him she was feeling poorly, did you ? And so my brother is to be kept out of his bed, and go without his supper, because you told him she was feeling poorly. There's gratitude for you !

*Marie.* Madam, the soup is boiling !

*Persomé.* Then pour it out, fool, and don't chatter. [*MARIE about to do so.*] No, no ; not like that. Here, let me do it, and do you put the salt cellars on the table—the silver ones.

*Marie.* The silver ones, Madam ?

*Persomé.* Yes, the silver ones. Are you deaf as well as stupid ?

*Marie.* They are sold, Madam.

*Persomé.* Sold ! [*with horror*] sold ! Are you mad ? Who sold them ? Why were they sold ?

*Marie.* Monseigneur the Bishop told me this afternoon while you were out to take them to Monsieur Gervais, who has often admired them, and sell them for as much as I could.

*Persomé.* But you had no right to do so without asking me.

*Marie* [*with awe*]. But, Madam, Monseigneur the Bishop told me.

*Persomé.* Monseigneur the Bishop is a—ahem! but—but what can he have wanted with the money?

*Marie.* Pardon, Madam, but I think it was for Mère Gringoire.

*Persomé.* Mère Gringoire indeed. Mère Gringoire! What, the old witch who lives at the top of the hill, and who says she is bedridden because she is too lazy to do any work? And what did Mère Gringoire want with the money, pray?

*Marie.* Madam, it was for the rent. The bailiff would not wait any longer, and threatened to turn her out to-day if it were not paid, so she sent little Jean to Monseigneur to ask for help, and——

*Persomé.* Oh, mon Dieu! It is hopeless, hopeless. We shall have nothing left. His estate is sold, his savings have gone. His furniture, everything. Were it not for my little dot we should starve! And now my beautiful—beautiful [*sob*] salt cellars. Ah, it is too much, too much [*she breaks down crying*].

*Marie.* Madam, I am sorry. If I had known——

*Persomé.* Sorry, and why, pray? If Monseigneur the Bishop chooses to sell his salt cellars he may do so, I suppose. Go and wash your hands, they are disgracefully dirty.

*Marie.* Yes, Madam [*going towards R.*].

[*Enter the BISHOP, C.*]

*Bishop.* Ah! how nice and warm it is in here. It is worth going out in the cold for the sake of the comfort of coming in.

[*PERSOMÉ has hastened to help him off with his coat, etc. MARIE has dropped a deep courtesy.*

*Bishop.* Thank you, dear. [*Looking at her*] Why, what is the matter? You have been crying. Has Marie been troublesome, eh? [*shaking his finger at her*]. Ah!

*Persomé.* No, it wasn't Marie—but—but——

*Bishop.* Well, well, you shall tell me presently. Marie, my child, run home now; your mother is better. I have prayed with her, and the doctor has been. Run home! [*MARIE putting on cloak and going.*] And, Marie, let yourself in quietly in case your mother is asleep.

*Marie.* Oh, thanks, thanks, Monseigneur.

[*She goes to door c.; as it opens the snow drives in.*

*Bishop.* Here, Marie, take my comforter, it will keep you warm. It is very cold to-night.

*Marie.* Oh no, Monseigneur! [*shamefacedly*].

*Persomé.* What nonsense, brother; she is young, she won't hurt.

*Bishop.* Ah, Persomé, you have not been out, you don't know how cold it has become. Here, Marie, let me put it on for you [*does so*]. There! Run along, little one. [*Exit MARIE, c.*

*Persomé.* Brother, I have no patience with you. There, sit down and take your soup, it has been waiting ever so long. And if it is spoilt, it serves you right.

*Bishop.* It smells delicious.

*Persomé.* I'm sure Marie's mother is not so ill that you need have stayed out on such a night as this. I believe those people *pretend* to be ill just to have the Bishop call on them. They have no thought of the Bishop!

*Bishop.* It is kind of them to want to see me.

*Persomé.* Well, for my part, I believe that charity begins at home.

*Bishop.* And so you make me this delicious soup. You are very good to me, sister.

*Persomé.* Good to you, yes ! I should think so. I should like to know where you would be without me to look after you. The dupe of every idle scamp or lying old woman in the parish.

*Bishop.* If people lie to me they are poorer, not I.

*Persomé.* But it is ridiculous ; you will soon have nothing left. You give away everything, everything !!!

*Bishop.* My dear, there is so much suffering in the world, and I can do so little [*sighs*], so very little.

*Persomé.* Suffering, yes ; but you never think of the suffering you cause to those who love you best, the suffering you cause to me.

*Bishop* [*rising*]. You, sister dear. Have I hurt you ? Ah, I remember you had been crying. Was it my fault ? I didn't mean to hurt you. I am sorry.

*Persomé.* Sorry. Yes. Sorry won't mend it. Humph ! Oh, do go on eating your soup before it gets cold.

*Bishop.* Very well, dear [*sits*]. But tell me——

*Persomé.* You are like a child, I can't trust you out of my sight. No sooner is my back turned than you get that little minx Marie to sell the silver salt cellars.

*Bishop.* Ah, yes, the salt cellars. It is a pity. You—you were proud of them ?

*Persomé.* Proud of them. Why, they have been in our family for years.

*Bishop.* Yes, it is a pity. They were beautiful ; but still, dear, one can eat salt out of china just as well.

*Persomé.* Yes, or meat off the floor, I suppose. Oh, it's coming to that. And as for that old wretch, Mère Gringoire, I wonder she had the audacity to send here again. The last time I saw her I gave her such a talking to that it ought to have had some effect.

*Bishop.* Yes ! I offered to take her in here for a day or two, but she seemed to think it might distress you.

*Persomé.* Distress me !!!

*Bishop.* And the bailiff, who is a very just man,



would not wait longer for the rent, so—so—you see I *had* to pay it.

*Persomé.* You *had* to pay it. [*Gesture of comic despair.*]

*Bishop.* Yes, and you see I had no money, so I had to dispose of the salt cellars. It was fortunate I had them, wasn't it? [*smiling*]. But I'm sorry I have grieved you.

*Persomé.* Oh, go on! go on! you are incorrigible. You'll sell your candlesticks next.

*Bishop* [*with real concern*]. No, no, sister, not my candlesticks.

*Persomé.* Oh! Why not? They would pay somebody's rent, I suppose.

*Bishop.* Ah, you are good, sister, to think of that; but—but I don't want to sell them. You see, dear, my mother gave them to me on—on her death-bed just after you were born, and—and she asked me to keep them in remembrance of her, so I would like to keep them; but perhaps it is a sin to set such store by them?

*Persomé.* Brother, brother, you will break my heart [*with tears in her voice*]. There! don't say anything more. Kiss me and give me your blessing. I am going to bed. [*They kiss.*]

[*BISHOP makes the sign of the cross and murmurs a blessing. PERSOMÉ locks cupboard door and goes R.*]

*Persomé.* Don't sit up too long and tire your eyes.

*Bishop.* No, dear! Good-night! [*PERSOMÉ exits R.*]

*Bishop* [*comes to table and opens a book, then looks up at the candlesticks*]. They would pay somebody's rent. It was kind of her to think of that. [*He stirs the fire, trims the lamp, arranges some books and papers, sits down, is restless, shivers slightly; clock outside strikes twelve and he settles to read. Music during this. Enter the CONVICT stealthily; he has a long knife and seizes the BISHOP from behind.*]