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A Double Deception

A Comedy in One Act

By ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS

Author of "Cowslip Farm," "The Fruit of His Folly," "The Heart of a Hero," "The Finger of Scorn," "A Scheme that Failed," "Dinner at Six," etc.

BOSTON
WALTER H. BAKER & CO

1901

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A Double Deception

CHARACTERS

ARCHIBALD SHILLINGSWORTH. *FS 3539*

MARCUS DILL.

LUCILLA, *Archibald's wife.* *.U 1376*

PENELOPE SHADRACH, *his aunt.*

MRS. BUNN, *the housekeeper.*

Time in playing, about forty-five minutes.

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COSTUMES

ARCHIBALD.—Light summer suit; straw hat when he goes out.

DILL.—Riding costume; top boots, etc.

LUCILLA.—Pretty, light summer morning dress. Hat for first exit.

PENELOPE.—Handsome traveling dress; quick change to attire of an old maid. (The performer may use her own judgment in making up for this part. She should, however, appear domineering and strong-minded, rather than too ridiculous.) Another quick change to first dress, or some other becoming costume.

MRS. BUNN.—Plain dress, white apron.

PROPERTIES

Letters and papers. Satchel, bundles, etc. Letter for Lucilla. Bell on table.



A Double Deception.

SCENE.—*The cozy sitting-room of the SHILLINGSWORTHS' country residence. It is August. As the curtain rises, the doorbell rings; then MRS. BUNN crosses from R. to C. D. and exits to L.; after pause, reënters, followed by MARCUS DILL.*

MRS. BUNN. Master and missus are at breakfast, sir, but they won't be long now.

MARCUS. Very well, then, I will wait. It is nothing important. I only wanted to say "Good-morning," and give Mr. Shillingsworth his mail. By the way, you might take it in to him, Mrs. Bunn. Just tell him that as I was riding by the post office, I thought I'd bring it along.

(Hands her letters and papers.)

MRS. B. Yes, sir, and thank you kindly for your trouble, sir. *[Exit R. with mail.]*

MAR. *(looks at his watch)*. After ten o'clock, and still at breakfast. I cannot understand such laziness, especially this fine weather. Ah! perhaps it means that they had another—er—disagreement, last night, and sat up late arguing the question, and ——

Enter MRS. BUNN, R.

MRS. B. Mr. Shillingsworth says he will be right out, sir.

MAR. Thank you, Mrs. Bunn. *[Exit MRS. BUNN, L.]*

(DILL walks about carelessly, goes up and looks off C., etc., until ARCHIBALD SHILLINGSWORTH enters R.)

ARCHIBALD. Ah, good-morning, Dill. Aren't you an early bird?

(Has papers, which he lays on table.)

MAR. Say, rather, aren't you a late one? *(They shake hands.)*

ARCH. Well, yes, maybe. You see, I—that is, *we*—didn't get to bed, or to *sleep*, I should say, very early last night—or this morning, rather.

MAR. You should say, rather, that is, maybe. So! You had something to talk over, eh? Something—excuse me, it's none of my business.

ARCH. M'm—maybe it isn't, but I'll tell you something. You see—well, hang it all, Dill, you know how it is with Lucilla and me. Don't you?

MAR. Why, of course I know that you are a young couple, very much in love, who have been married only about six months, and that you are extremely happy and so on. That's considerable to know, isn't it?

ARCH. But that isn't all. You also know that sometimes we have little—what do you call 'em?—*spats*. No, not spats, just little disagreements. You've known me long enough, Dill, to know that I am of a quiet, peaceful disposition. Haven't you?

MAR. Yes, I guess I have. I can't recall that I have ever found you otherwise.

ARCH. Well, then you will believe me when I tell you that it isn't my fault—not *all* my fault, anyway—I'm willing to bear my share of it; but I *do* say that I think Lucilla—(*looking r., cautiously*) sh! she might hear.

MAR. “Sh!” yourself, then. I'm not saying anything. What are you driving at, anyway?

ARCH. I'll tell you. (*Goes and looks off r., then comes back, and he and DILL sit, one r. c., the other c.*) What made you send my letters in by Mrs. Bunn? How did you happen to bring them, anyway?

MAR. Why, I was out for my morning horseback ride, and as I was coming right by the post office, and in this direction, I thought it would accommodate you if I brought your letters over; that's all. Didn't you want them?

ARCH. Why, y-yes, I suppose so, and I am much obliged to you, I am sure; but I do wish you hadn't sent them in to me as you did.

MAR. But why?

ARCH. Well, there's one I didn't want my wife to see, and of course I had to let her see it. She's reading it now.

MAR. See here, Archibald Shillingsworth—

ARCH. And see here, Marcus Dill, don't you lecture. I don't want your advice, I want your help.

MAR. Help? Explain.

ARCH. I will. You know, I just started to tell you that my wife and I had a sort of a disagreement last night? Well, that letter has upset all the good effects of the talk I gave her and defeated me just as I thought victory was in sight.

MAR. I don't understand.

ARCH. Of course you don't, yet. Wait till I tell you. It's all about my Aunt Penelope.

MAR. Who is she?

ARCH. Aunt Penelope Shadrach, my mother's sister. Isn't that a name for you? Penelope Shadrach. Shadrach was my mother's maiden name, you know.

MAR. I understand. Well, what about your Aunt Penelope Shadrach?

ARCH. She is coming here, to *stay*. My wife says she shan't, and I say she shall, and there we stand. We didn't expect her for a month yet, and I spent half the night talking Lucilla into a peaceable frame of mind, by telling her that lots of things might happen in a month, and so forth, and now you bring us a letter saying that Aunt Penelope will be here to-day—this very morning—this hour, maybe; and Lucilla is in an uproar again. I wouldn't have had her see that letter for five dollars—*ten*.

MAR. I don't see why not. I should think you would rather be prepared, seeing she is really coming, and so soon.

ARCH. Nothing of the sort. (*He has risen.*) It would have been ten times better for Lucilla to be taken by surprise, then perhaps, when she saw Aunt Penelope, she would melt and treat her cordially. But *now*— Oh, dear!

MAR. I don't see as matters are in such a terrible state. It doesn't seem so very alarming to me. At any rate, I don't see how I am going to be of any assistance to you. (*Rises.*) I think I would better be going.

ARCH. (*detaining him*). Oh, no! I want you to go to the station and meet Aunt Penelope.

MAR. *Meet*—man alive, I never *saw* your Aunt Penelope. I can't go and meet her.

ARCH. Oh, yes, you can. You've got to. And while you're gone, I will do the best I can to pacify Lucilla and get her to welcome Aunt Penelope in a becoming manner. You'll find her easily enough. Probably there won't another woman get off the train at this time of day, so you grab the first one you see,

MAR. And how shall I bring her here—on horseback?

ARCH. No, of course not. Just hitch your horse to our phaeton. You see, I depend upon you because our man is out in the field, haying, and under the circumstances I can't go. So come on. (*Urging DILL toward C. D.*)

MAR. (*as they go out*). But I don't want to meet your Aunt Penelope, I—— (*They are outside.*)

ARCH. But I want you to, and ——

(*Their voices die away C. to L., as LUCILLA enters R., goes to C. D. and looks after them. She has a letter, at which she occasionally glances; finally comes down and rings bell vigorously. After a brief pause, MRS. BUNN enters L.*)

LUCILLA. Mrs. Bunn, where did Mr. Dill and Mr. Shillingsworth go?

MRS. B. To the stable, I believe, ma'am.

LUC. Do you know what for?

MRS. B. N-no, ma'am.

LUC. If you do, you tell me. Didn't you overhear anything that they said?

MRS. B. I didn't hear so very much, ma'am; only something about the 10:20 train, and the phaeton, and Aunt Somebody or something.

LUC. And that's enough. I understand perfectly. He expects that old maid here on the 10:20 train, and he has sent Marcus Dill to meet her. He thinks I'll have to have her here, if she once arrives. We'll see. That is all, Mrs. Bunn; you may go.

(*Exit MRS. BUNN L., as ARCHIBALD enters C. D. from L.*)

ARCH. Lucilla.

LUC. Oh, it's you, is it? So you have sent your friend, Marcus Dill, to meet your Aunt Penelope, have you?

ARCH. Why, how did you know?

LUC. How did I know? Do you think I am deaf and dumb and blind? (*Shaking letter in his face.*) Doesn't this letter say that she will be here at twenty minutes past ten, and don't I know that it is after half-past now? Well, let her come. I won't be here to meet her.

ARCH. Why, Lucilla, where are you going?

LUC. I don't know, I don't care. You think more of your

Aunt Penelope than you do of me. I think it's dreadful!
(*Weeps.*)

ARCH. Now, Lucilla, don't *cry*! You ——

LUC. I *will* cry! You make me. I don't see how you can treat me so—bring your horrid old aunt here to interfere, and break up our happy home and everything. Oh, how can you do it?

ARCH. See here, Lucilla, you're unreasonable ——

LUC. It's *not* unreasonable for me to want to protect our home against the invasions of an old maid named Penelope Shadrach! It's unreasonable of you to expect me to submit to it. And I won't! I won't!

(*She starts to exit R., but he detains her.*)

ARCH. Where are you going? What are you going to do?

LUC. I'm going for a walk; I'm going to calm myself, and then I am coming back here and face your Aunt Penelope Shadrach and tell her what's what. *That's* where I'm going—*that's* what I'm going to do! Do you understand, Archibald Shillingsworth—*do* you?

ARCH. No, I don't, nor you either. You don't know what you are talking about.

LUC. Oh, I don't? You let me pass. I'm not going to stay here another minute.

(*She is trying to push past him, when MRS. BUNN enters C. D. L., with a satchel, one or two boxes, an umbrella, etc.*)

MRS. B. There's a lady out here, ma'am.

(*They pause and look at her.*)

LUC. A lady?

MRS. B. Yes, ma'am. She says her name is Miss Penelope ——

LUC. Shadrach! So she has arrived, has she? Very well.
(*She starts to exit R., but ARCHIBALD bars her way.*) Let me go!

ARCH. But Lucilla, my dear!

LUC. I said I wouldn't meet her, and I won't!

ARCH. But you must.

LUC. But I *won't*! (*She escapes him and runs off R.*)

ARCH. Well, here's a pretty go. When did she arrive,

Mrs. Bunn, and how did it happen? Dill can't be half way to the station yet.

MRS. B. She came in a hack. These are her things. What shall I do with them?

ARCH. I don't know. Anything. Put them down there somewhere. Great Scott! I didn't expect her yet.

MRS. B. (*who has started to go out L., looking off C. D.*). Here she comes now, sir.

(MRS. BUNN *stands aside as* PENELOPE SHADRACH *enters C. D., from L. She is a bright, pretty young lady, about eighteen years old, stylishly dressed.*)

ARCH. Penelope!

PEN. Archibald!

(*He is about to kiss her, then desists awkwardly and shakes her hand instead.*)

ARCH. Well, well, so it's really you! I almost kissed you.

PEN. And why not? Guess you have a right to kiss your *auntie*, haven't you?

ARCH. M'm—I should *think* so. Well, then, *auntie*, (*kisses her lightly*) there you are.

PEN. That's an awfully stingy kiss. But I suppose you have to keep the best ones for your wife. By the way, where *is* your wife?

ARCH. Oh, she's about somewhere. You see, we didn't expect you just yet, and—Mrs. Bunn, take Miss Shadrach's things to her room.

MRS. B. Yes, sir; but which *is* her room?

ARCH. I don't know—any old room! No, I mean—you know, the room she always has——

PEN. Why, I was never here before.

ARCH. Yes, I know. I didn't mean that, I meant—I don't know *what* I meant, but Mrs. Bunn ought to know. Take them to *some* room, Mrs. Bunn, and let it go at that.

MRS. B. Very well, sir.

[*Exit L., with things.*]

ARCH. And now tell me how you happened to arrive so unexpectedly.

PEN. Unexpectedly? Why, didn't you get my letter?

ARCH. Letter? Oh, yes, so I did. To be sure. Yes. Why, you said you would be here at ten-twenty, didn't you? Yes, I sent Marcus Dill to meet you.

PEN. Marcus Dill? Who is he—your coachman?

ARCH. Goodness, no! He's a friend of mine—a rich bachelor. He lives a mile or so beyond here. He just happened over, brought your letter, in fact; and, as I couldn't go to meet you, I sent him. But I guess he missed you.

PEN. I guess he did. There was nobody to meet me, so I took the only hack in sight and came that way.

ARCH. You must have traveled all night to get here so early.

PEN. I did, and I'm tired to death and half starved, and as dirty as a ragamuffin. (*Brushing her dress.*) My! but your roads are dusty.

ARCH. I'll call Mrs. Bunn and have her show you to your room.

PEN. I wish you would; and while you are doing it I will sit down and rest a minute. (*Sits.*) I suppose your wife is just dying to see what I look like?

ARCH. O-oh, y-yes—of course.

PEN. It's so strange we never met, isn't it? But I was abroad when you were married, and have been home such a short time. I was so glad to come here, you know, and of course I knew you were anxious to have me. It must be lonesome here in this country place.

ARCH. M'm—yes, rather. Sometimes. But then we enjoy it. This is only our summer home, you see. We go back into town in the fall.

PEN. Oh, I see. I presume you have told your wife—Lucilla, I mean—all about me—how I look and all?

ARCH. Well, no, not exactly: I never thought to until your letter came this morning, and since then I haven't had time.

PEN. Why, I should think you would have told her everything you could about me.

ARCH. N-no, I was kind of putting it off—I mean, I——

PEN. Oh, I suppose you wanted to let me surprise her. How jolly!

ARCH. Yes, isn't it? She thinks you're a crabbed, dried-up, meddling old maid——

PEN. (*jumping up*). What!

ARCH. Yes. She imagines you want to run the house and boss her around and usurp her place, and—— Oh, a few other pleasant things like that. (*He laughs.*)

PEN. And you didn't contradict her?

ARCH. I didn't get a chance. She said she wouldn't meet you and ran away somewhere. Ha! ha! ha!

PEN. What's so funny about it? I think it is dreadful, after I expected such a warm welcome and all. (*About to weep.*) I shall go right away again.

ARCH. Oh, no, you won't! Don't you see how it is? Lucilla has deceived herself, and when she sees what you really are, she will be so relieved and delighted that she will be perfectly happy to have you stay with us always.

PEN. I hope so, I am sure; but I am a little doubtful. But I don't intend to stay always, anyway. That was only a little joke of mine. I'm going to stay only a few weeks, if I do that long. But whatever made Lucilla get it into her head that I was old and crabbed and all that?

ARCH. Your name. Don't you see? It sounds like it.

PEN. Penelope Shadrach! That awful name again. (*Laughing merrily.*) I don't wonder she thought so. I shall have to change my name, won't I?

ARCH. Yes, or you will be an old maid in earnest.

PEN. That's so, but not *right* away. I have a few years grace yet.

ARCH. Well, I'll go and send Mrs. Bunn to you. (*Starts L.*)

PEN. Yes, do. She'd better look out or I may *eat* her, too. I'm hungry enough to eat a dozen buns.

[ARCHIBALD *laughs and exits L.*

PEN. Well, I never! Mrs. Shillingsworth thought I was a wrinkled, dried-up, meddling old maid, who was coming to stay with them forever and make their lives miserable, did she? I don't wonder she rebelled. I would have done so too. (*She sits and is silent a moment, then seems struck by a happy thought and laughs out gleefully.*) Oh, wouldn't it be fun? I'll do it, too, if I can get the things to fix up with. I'll disguise myself as just such an old maid as Lucilla Shillingsworth imagines me to be, and show her what might have been.

Enter MRS. BUNN, L.; PENELOPE rises and goes to her.

PEN. Oh, Mrs. Bunn, have you an old dress I could take?

MRS. B. An old dress, miss?

PEN. Yes, any old thing. And have you another—excuse me—false front, beside the one you have on?

MRS. B. (*feeling of her front hair*). Why, yes, I have my best one. But what —

PEN. I want to borrow it and a dress, and a few other things. I want to fix up like an old maid.

MRS. B. Good land! What do you want to do that for?

PEN. Well, you see, Mrs. Shillingsworth never saw me, and she thinks I am an awful old maid, perfectly horrid, and I want to make her think I am, at first, and then when she sees that I am *not*, why, she'll be so relieved that she will be glad to have me here. Don't you see?

MRS. B. Y-yes, I guess so. But I am afraid she won't like it, and —

PEN. Oh, never you mind. You won't have any of the blame to bear. It is only for a little joke, anyway, and they will all enjoy it.

MRS. B. I don't believe you can fix up so as to fool her.

PEN. Yes, I can. I have taken old maid parts in private theatricals lots of times and know just how to do it. It won't take me any time, with your help. Come on, let's hurry.

MRS. B. Well, if you're sure they won't blame me for it.

PEN. Of course they won't. I won't let them. (*The voices of ARCHIBALD and MARCUS are heard off C. to L.*) There comes somebody now. Hurry up! (*Runs off L.*)

MRS. B. For the land's sake! I never heard of such foolishness. [*Exits L.*]

Enter ARCHIBALD C. D. L., followed by MARCUS.

ARCH. So you didn't see Aunt Penelope, after all?

MAR. No. That was a Tom fool's errand you sent me on. She arrived here ahead of me.

ARCH. Yes, but you didn't get far, did you?

MAR. No, I saw the hack come here and knew she must be in it, as it was so long after train time. I suppose I will meet her this morning.

ARCH. Oh, yes, you must wait. She'll be down soon. I tell you what, Dill, she's a "peach." I expect you'll fall in love with her at first sight and take her off our hands.

MAR. Small danger, I guess. I'm not looking for my fate.

(They come down and sit.)

ARCH. No, maybe not; but fate doesn't have to be looked after, you know. And Penelope—well, she's a fate worth meeting, I can tell you.

MAR. Describe her to me.

ARCH. Ah, see! you are curious already. But I can't describe her—I'm not a poet. However, she is about eighteen, and all that a charming girl of that age can be or needs to be. You wait. You'll see her in a few minutes. You must stay to luncheon with us and get acquainted.

MAR. Well, I don't see how I can resist the temptation to do so, after such an alluring description of your paragon of an aunt.

ARCH. Of course you can't. (*Rising and looking R.*) I wonder where Lucilla is. I must go and look her up.

MAR. Evidently she didn't expect your Aunt Penelope.

ARCH. But evidently she *did*. That's just why she isn't here.

MAR. *It is?*

ARCH. Yes. I know it is very inhospitable of her—worse than that. But you see, Dill, it is just as I told you. My wife has gotten it into her head that Aunt Penelope is a regular old maid—about forty, cross, interfering, bossy, and all that; consequently she doesn't want her to come here and has run away so as not to be here to meet her. It's awful, I know, but I couldn't prevent it. I tried. It will be all right once Lucilla sees Aunt Penelope.

MAR. Why didn't you tell her what your aunt is like?

ARCH. Well, I don't know. Somehow, I didn't think, at first; then I was so provoked I thought I would let her go on thinking what she pleased and find out the difference for herself. It will serve her right when she does. Don't you think so?

MAR. Perhaps. But I don't think you have acted very wisely. You should have told her, for your aunt's sake, if for no other reason.

ARCH. Well, it can't be helped now, and I guess it will come out all right. Penelope is too sensible to care. (*Enter MRS. BUNN, L.*) Ah, Mrs. Bunn, did you find a room for Miss Shadrach?

MRS. B. Yes, sir; I put her in the best spare room. I thought mebbe you'd want her to have as good as there is.

ARCH. Certainly I do. And have you made her comfortable—given her something to eat, and so forth?

MRS. B. She's all right, sir. I managed to give her all she asked for, though I must say —

ARCH. Must say what?

MRS. B. That—well, that she is easy to please, sir, and it's

a pleasure to do for her. I was looking for Mrs. Shillingsworth. Have you seen her?

ARCH. Not just lately. I am going to look for her.

MRS. B. I wanted to ask about the dinner.

ARCH. Oh, don't worry about dinner yet; we have got to have luncheon first. (MRS. BUNN *is about to exit* L.) By the way, Mrs. Bunn, Mr. Dill is going to stay and lunch with us, so set an extra place. *Two* extra places; there's Aunt Penelope.

MRS. B. Yes, sir. (*Going.*)

ARCH. And—oh, Mrs. Bunn!

MRS. B. Yes, sir.

ARCH. Be sure and set Mr. Dill next to Miss Shadrach.

MRS. B. Very well. [*Exit* L.]

MAR. How considerate of you. But perhaps the lady will object.

ARCH. Oh, no, she won't. Now, Dill, I am going out to look for my wife. Can you amuse yourself a few minutes?

MAR. (*rising*). Certainly. I'll walk out a few minutes or read the paper. Don't worry about me.

ARCH. All right. I won't be gone long.

[*Exit* ARCHIBALD C. D. R.]

(MARCUS *takes paper from table* R., *unfolds it and begins to read as he slowly saunters out* C. D. *to* L. *He has barely disappeared when* LUCILLA *enters* R. *She wears a hat and is somewhat flurried.*)

LUC. I wonder where Archibald is. Dear me, I am ashamed of myself, since I come to think it over and have time to consider. Perhaps his Aunt Penelope isn't so bad, after all. Some old maids are real nice, they say, and, after all, she is Archibald's aunt and—well, I suppose mine, too. I ought to treat her decently, if nothing more. I don't see where they all are. (*Goes up and looks off* C. *to* L.) Ah, there is Mr. Dill. I will ask him if he knows where Archibald is. (*Calling.*) Mr. Dill! Dear me, he's so absorbed in that paper. (*Calls, louder than before.*) Mr. Dill!!

MAR. (*without*). Yes. What is it?

LUC. Won't you come here a moment, please?

Enter MARCUS, C. D. L.

MAR. Did you call me, Mrs. Shillingsworth?

LUC. Yes. I wanted to ask you if you know where Archibald is. I cannot find him anywhere.

MAR. Why, I believe he said something about going to look for you.

LUC. Did he? In which direction?

MAR. (*pointing off R.*). That way, toward the grove.

LUC. Thank you. I'll go and see if I can find him. (*Starts R., then pauses.*) Oh, by the way, Mr. Dill, did you find our Aunt Penelope?

MAR. No, I did not. She came alone, before I had a chance to meet her.

LUC. Then you haven't seen her?

MAR. No, not yet; but Archibald invited me to stay to luncheon and meet her. According to what he says, I have a great pleasure in store. He tells me that she is charming.

LUC. Really? Well, I am glad to hear it. No doubt we will soon have an opportunity to judge what his conception of "charming" is. You know, I haven't seen her either.

MAR. So I understood.

LUC. Well, I will go and find Archibald and return just as soon as I can. No doubt Aunt Penelope will be down by that time.

MAR. I dare say. (*Exit LUCILLA, R.*) Well! I wonder what has caused her to change her mind so suddenly.

(*He reads paper and is again going out C., when PENELOPE speaks loudly off L. He pauses and listens.*)

PEN. (*without*). Archibald! Archibald Shillingsworth! Where are you?

MAR. I wonder who that is.

Enter PENELOPE, L. MARCUS retires in C. D. and watches her. She is attired as an old maid, with side curls, false front, neck handkerchief, etc., and speaks in a shrill voice with a quick, rasping manner. Occasionally she forgets her character for an instant, and then quickly resumes it.

PEN. Land sakes! There ain't nobody here. It's a pretty way to welcome me. (*Looks about and sees MARCUS; he attempts to slip away, but she goes up and detains him. As they talk, both come down.*) See here, who be you—the hired man? If you be, what you hanging 'round in here for? Ain't

you got no work to do? Where's Mr. Shillingsworth, I'd like to know?

MAR. (*bewildered*). No, I am *not*—I don't know.

PEN. Well, why don't you find out? I can't wait all day. It's time he was around, and his wife too, if he's got one. I don't know's he has. I never seen such a place, anyhow. Nobody seems to know anything. I guess it's a good thing I come to take a hand and see to things.

MAR. (*aside*). It must be a new housekeeper.

PEN. Here I arrived 'most an hour ago and I ain't had a mouthful to eat nor any attention paid to me. It's a pretty way to treat me, I must say.

MAR. Are you the new housekeeper, madam?

PEN. *Housekeeper!* I should hope not, though I must say they need one. And I ain't "Madam," either, if you please. I'm *Miss*, and always will be. I'd like to see myself marrying a man. I guess not!

MAR. Oh, excuse me. I didn't know.

PEN. Well, you ain't to blame for what you don't know. I'll tell you now, before we go any further, that I am Miss Penelope Shadrach and Archibald Shillingsworth's aunt on his mother's side, from Michigan, and come to live with him, and it's a good thing I have, for I can see plain enough how things are going here, and that's every which way.

MAR. (*who has been overcome with surprise, now gasps out*). D-do you mean to say that you are—you—you are Archibald—Mr. Shillingsworth's Aunt Penelope—*Shadrach?*

PEN. Of course I am, and why not?

MAR. Why, he told me that you —

PEN. Well, that I *what?*

MAR. Was—that is, he said—that you—were coming to-day.

PEN. Well, and I have come, but they don't seem very glad to see me. Why ain't his wife here, and where is he? I call it a nice way to treat his loving aunt, who has been good enough to come and live with them and see to things, and show them how to manage.

(*She is walking about, examining everything, looking out the different doors, etc.*)

MAR. Yes, of course. It's very kind of you.

PEN. Of course it is. I never think of myself. I am one

who believes in sacrificing myself for others. I mean to take right hold here and run this house as it ought to be run.

MAR. Y-yes, I see. If you will excuse me, I will go now. I—I may be able to find your nephew and send him to you.

PEN. Well, I wish you would, and don't be too long about it, either.

MAR. N-no, madam—I mean *Miss*—I won't.

[*He exits hurriedly, C. to R.*]

PEN. Oh, dear! I'll bet it's that Mr. Dill Archibald spoke about. What must he think of me? It's dreadful, I know, but when I go into a thing I believe in carrying it through. I am sure he will excuse me, when it is all explained to him later. (*She casually looks off R.*) I declare, there comes—it must be Archibald's wife. It *is*, I am sure. Now for it.

(*PENELOPE retires to back of stage and LUCILLA does not see her as she enters R.*)

LUC. I couldn't find Archibald anywhere. Dear me, where could he have gone?

PEN. (*coming down*). Good-morning. Are you Mrs. Shillingsworth?

LUC. (*starting and looking at PENELOPE in surprise*). Yes, I am. Did you wish to see me?

PEN. I did and I do. I've waited for you goodness knows how long. I am your Aunt Penelope Shadrach.

LUC. You! You are Aunt—Penelope—Shadrach?

PEN. Of course I am. Didn't I just say I was? (*Extending her hand stiffly*.) How do you do, my dear niece?

LUC. (*taking her hand in a dazed manner*). How do—you—do?

PEN. You may kiss me, my dear. (*Presents her cheek, which LUCILLA kisses coldly*.) Land! do you call that a kiss? It's more like rubbing my cheek against an iron lamppost. Where you been all this time? There wa'n't nobody to meet me, nor anything. Didn't you know I was coming?

LUC. N-not until—not quite so soon. You took us somewhat by surprise.

PEN. It looks that way. I ain't had a thing to eat nor anything else. That housekeeper of yours doesn't know her business, I can see that. It's a good thing I've come to take things out of her hands and run them as they ought to be run. You and Archibald can be thankful I could come to you just

when you needed me most, and show you how to keep house and be saving. I see plain enough that there ain't no head nor tail to anything here. I've come just in the nick of time. (LUCILLA *is about to speak.*) There! you needn't try to thank me. I know you are grateful for the blessing of my presence, and I promise never to leave you again. I see my duty, and when I do, I ain't one to shirk it.

LUC. (*who is almost speechless with surprise and indignation, now speaks, falteringly*). But, Aunt Penelope, you are mistaken; things are not that way here. Mrs. Bunn is very capable and gives entire satisfaction.

PEN. Don't talk to me! Don't you suppose I've got eyes and ears and common sense? Can't I tell just how this house is run, without being in it more than an hour, if I have that? I guess you can't tell me anything about it. If you want me to stay here, you will have to let me superintend things and save you from financial ruin and matrimonial unhappiness.

LUC. But——

PEN. Now, don't try to tell me how glad you are, my *dear* Lucilla. I know all about it. I am going into the kitchen now, and show that housekeeper of yours a few things about cooking. She's the most wasteful thing I ever saw. I will be back again soon, my dear. (*Aside, as she exits L.*) I guess I have given her enough for the first dose.

LUC. (*looking after her a moment in dazed silence*). O-o-oh! So *that* is our Aunt Penelope Shadrach! She is worse than her name—worse than I ever imagined she could be. But she needn't think I am going to be run over and bossed around like that. No, indeed! I'll show her. The idea of her coming here and putting herself ahead like that! Why, you would think she owned the whole place and everybody in it. But what can I do? I suppose we can't turn her out of doors, and—oh, dear, it's dreadful! I can't stand it! I won't! I'll find Archibald and tell him that he must choose between her and me. [Exits R., weeping.

Enter C. D. R., ARCHIBALD and MARCUS, talking excitedly. They come down, expostulating with each other.

ARCH. You must be crazy, Dill. What do you mean by speaking of my Aunt Penelope in that way? She *isn't* ugly and old and——

MAR. She's forty-eight if she's a minute, and I don't care

if she *is* your aunt, she isn't pretty and sweet and demure, as you insist. I don't believe you have seen her at all.

ARCH. What! Didn't I receive her? Didn't I talk with her, right here, just a few minutes ago?

MAR. Then you must be color-blind and stone deaf and I don't know what all. Why, *I* saw her, too, and talked with her, and —

ARCH. And you know more about it than I do, I suppose? Dill, you aren't safe to be at large. Your place is in a lunatic asylum.

MAR. Oh, well, I'm not going to argue with you, but I don't see where the joke comes in.

ARCH. Joke? Come, come, Dill, don't pretend to be so innocent. If it's a joke, it is of your own making. We'll drop it until Aunt Penelope puts in an appearance and then see which is right.

Enter MRS. BUNN, L.

MAR. All right, I'm agreed. But here's Mrs. Bunn. We might ask her.

ARCH. Yes, we will. Mrs. Bunn, you have seen Miss Shadrach, haven't you?

MRS. B. Yes, sir, I have seen her.

ARCH. What do you think of her?

MRS. B. Think of her, sir? Why, I think she's a nice young lady.

MAR. *Young*, did you say?

MRS. B. W-e-l-l, not so *very*! But she ain't so old, neither.

ARCH. I should say she wasn't. Now, Mrs. Bunn, you describe her to us.

MRS. B. I—I'd rather not, if you please, sir.

ARCH. Rather not? The idea! Just tell us what she looks like. Isn't she sweet and pretty?

MRS. B. I should call her that, Mr. Shillingsworth.

ARCH. There, Dill, you see!

MAR. But, Mrs. Bunn, hasn't she a sour, crabbed look, like an old maid?

MRS. B. A—come to think of it, Mr. Dill, I think she has.

MAR. There, Shillingsworth, you see!

ARCH. Mrs. Bunn, how can you say such a thing? You know better. Why, Aunt Penelope doesn't look a bit like an old maid. Does she?

MAR. She does too, doesn't she?

MRS. B. Well, I must say that you are both right. I have seen her when she did, and I have seen her when she didn't. But if you'll excuse me, I mustn't stand here talking. I was looking for Mrs. Shillingsworth, to ask her about the dinner, and if she isn't here —

ARCH. She isn't, and I don't know where she is. Mrs. Bunn, I hope you are not losing your senses.

MRS. B. I hope not, thank you, sir. Perhaps if I can't find Mrs. Shillingsworth, Miss Shadrach will give me orders. That seems to be in her line. Excuse me, sir. I don't mean any disrespect. [Exit L.

MAR. (*laughing heartily*). Well, is it decided?

ARCH. It's decided that that woman is crazy or else I'm what you say—color-blind and everything else. (*Looking R.*) Ah, here comes Lucilla.

MAR. I guess I would better leave you together.

ARCH. Very well; but don't go too far. We want to settle this question about Aunt Penelope.

MAR. (*who has gone up C.*). Oh, I won't be far off, never fear. [Exit C. D. L.

ARCH. (*calling off R.*). Lucilla!

Enter LUCILLA, R.

LUC. Oh, there you are. I have been looking everywhere for you.

ARCH. And I have been looking for you. Where have you been all this time?

LUC. I came back, after a little while, resolved to do my duty and receive your Aunt Penelope cordially and make the best of it.

ARCH. (*putting his arm about her*). That's a dear, good, sensible little woman.

LUC. (*weeping*). But, oh, Archibald, I can't!

ARCH. (*drawing away from her*). Can't! What do you mean?

LUC. Just that. I cannot stand it. She's perfectly awful!

ARCH. Why, have you seen her?

LUC. Seen her? I should say I had. Oh, Archibald, I can't live with her here!

ARCH. I'm sure I don't know what you mean by that. To my mind, Aunt Penelope is one of the mildest, sweetest young ladies I ever saw. She couldn't be disagreeable if she tried.

LUC. Why, Archibald Shillingsworth! what are you talk-

ing about? I saw her here not ten minutes ago, and she bossed and scolded and took on terribly. She said we didn't know how to run this house and it was her duty to stay here *always* and run it for us, and that Mrs. Bunn didn't know her business and must be discharged, and —— Oh, dear, I don't know what all! But I—I can't stand it and I won't! So there! You may choose between her and me.

ARCH. Well, I must say I don't know what to make of it. You and Marcus Dill must have made up a plot to play a joke on me, or something. You seem to have the same opinion of Aunt Penelope that he has. Now, own up, dear, aren't you joking?

LUC. I only wish I were. Goodness knows, I would be glad to find it all a joke. But it isn't; it is the awful truth.

ARCH. Wait a minute. I am going to call Dill and see if we can't straighten this matter out.

(He goes to C. D. and calls "Dill!" but getting no response, goes out to L. LUCILLA goes up and looks after him. Just then, PENELOPE enters L.)

PEN. Oh, there you are! I've been looking for you. I want to tell you that I can't do nothing *with* that housekeeper of yours. She refuses to obey my orders.

LUC. *(coming down)*. That is exactly what I wish her to do. Mrs. Bunn takes her orders from *me*!

PEN. What's that? Do you mean to say ——

LUC. I mean to say, Miss Shadrach, that you are not supposed to take the affairs of this household into your hands just yet. I am still mistress here.

PEN. And a pretty mistress you are, too. Mebby you don't appreciate what I am willing to do for you? You don't, I know you don't; but it ain't to be expected. However, I shan't let it make a bit of difference. When I see my duty plainly before me, I strive to do it in spite of all obstacles.

LUC. You mistake your duty this time, madam. I will not argue with you, but I shall let my husband talk the matter over with you. I have nothing further to say at present.

PEN. Oh, you haven't? Very well, then! I'm willing.

Enter ARCHIBALD and MARCUS, C., just in time to see PENELOPE sail majestically out L.

ARCH. W-why, who is *that*?

LUC. Who? As if you didn't know,

MAR. Yes; as if you didn't know.

ARCH. But I *don't* know. I never saw that queer specimen of femininity before in my life.

LUC. Archibald Shillingsworth, what do you mean?

MAR. Yes, Archibald Shillingsworth, what do you mean?

ARCH. I mean that I want to know who that woman is who just sailed out of here. What was she saying to you, Lucilla?

LUC. No more than I was saying to her, you may be sure. I came right out and told her that she couldn't run this place quite yet. And she can't, not while I am here.

ARCH. Of course not. What right has she here, anyway?

LUC. That's what I should like to know.

ARCH. Why didn't you turn her out?

LUC. Why, I couldn't very well do that, could I? You know you wouldn't like it if I did. If anybody turns her out, it must be you.

ARCH. Then I will. We don't want any crazy women around here.

MAR. Oh, *she* isn't crazy, Shillingsworth. She's what you call demure and sweet and pretty and ——

ARCH. I? See here, what are you talking about?

MAR. She's about eighteen, and all that a charming girl can or should be. Ha! ha! ha!

ARCH. Dill, you are constantly giving further evidence of being a fit subject for a lunatic asylum. Lucilla, can you see any sense in what he says?

LUC. I can't see any sense in what *you* say. You pretend you don't know your own aunt ——

ARCH. My *what*?

LUC. Your Aunt Penelope Shadrach, to be sure. I don't see what you mean by saying that wasn't she who was just talking to me.

ARCH. What! That woman?

LUC. Why, of course.

MAR. To be sure.

ARCH. Now you are *both* crazy. That wasn't my Aunt Penelope. I never saw that woman before.

LUC. Archibald!

MAR. (*half aside*). Poor fellow!

ARCH. Well, I have had enough of this. We will summon Aunt Penelope and let her decide the question.

MAR. Yes, that's an excellent plan.

LUC. Why, yes ; that is the very thing to do.

(ARCHIBALD rings bell.)

MAR. I wonder we didn't think of it before.

ARCH. We can soon tell who is wrong and who is not. Somebody is either crazy or trying to play a huge joke. We want to see who it is. (*Enter MRS. BUNN, L.*) Mrs. Bunn, ask Miss Shadrach to come here at once, if she will be so kind.

MRS. B. Yes, sir. [*Exit L.*]

LUC. I don't see how you can call it a joke, Archibald. To me it looks very serious.

ARCH. Just don't let's say any more about it. Wait a minute.

(*They stand in silence, waiting. Finally ARCHIBALD gets nervous, walks about, looks out C., then L., etc.*)

LUC. Oh, Archibald, do keep still. You make me nervous.

ARCH. I wonder why she doesn't come.

LUC. I am sure I don't know.

MAR. She will be here when she does come. Give her time.

ARCH. (*looking off L.*) Ah, here she is. (*Enter L., PENELOPE, attired as at first, or in another becoming dress, appearing as her natural self. ARCHIBALD takes her hand and leads her down C.*) Allow me to present my aunt, Miss Penelope Shadrach. This, my dear aunt, is my wife ; and this, my friend, Mr. Marcus Dill.

(*LUCILLA and MARCUS are stricken dumb with amazement and simply stare at PENELOPE.*)

PEN. (*in a very polite and refined manner.*) I am very glad to meet you, Lucilla, if I may call you that. (*Kisses LUCILLA, who submits in a bewildered manner.*) And you also, Mr. Dill. (*Bows to him.*)

MAR. I—I am happy t-to meet you, Miss S-Shad-rach.

LUC. I—but I don't understand. You are not our Aunt Penelope.

PEN. Oh, yes, I am, my dear. Why do you think I am not ?

LUC. Then who is that other woman ?

PEN. What other woman?

ARCH. Why, you see, Aunt Penelope, Lucilla and Mr. Dill here have gotten it into their heads that you are an old maid and cross and sour and everything like that. They insist that you were here talking to them, and that you were old and ugly, with all the disagreeable manners possible. Did you ever hear such nonsense?

LUC. Why, I *saw* her.

MAR. And so did I.

ARCH. See? They still hold to their delusion.

PEN. It was no delusion!

ARCH. What!

LUC. What do you mean?

PEN. (*to LUCILLA*). Will you promise to forgive me, my dear, if I tell you?

LUC. Forgive *you*? For what?

PEN. Do you promise?

LUC. Y-yes, I promise.

PEN. And you also, Mr. Dill?

MAR. Certainly. I will promise anything you like, if you will only solve this mystery.

PEN. And how about you, Archibald?

ARCH. I don't know what you are talking about, but I am agreed.

PEN. (*suddenly assumes the attitude of the old maid and speaks in the tone which she had formerly used*). I don't like the way things are run in this house, and I'm going to take them into my own hands and run them as they ought to be run. It's my duty, and when I see my duty — (*She has been rattling this off, while the others look at her in complete amazement. Finally ARCHIBALD interrupts her by breaking into hearty laughter, in which MARCUS joins him, while LUCILLA hovers between smiles and tears. To LUCILLA.*) Now do you understand who that other woman was, my dear?

LUC. You!

PEN. Yes, I.

LUC. But why—why did you do it?

PEN. To show you what you thought I was, what I might be, and what I *am*. Is it plain now?

LUC. (*coolly*). I think I understand.

PEN. And remember, I have your forgiveness.

LUC. Yes, that is true, you have. It serves me right, too. And did Archibald tell you what—what——

PEN. What you expected me to be? Yes, he did. But you aren't going to be angry with him, either; are you?

ARCH. Of course she isn't. The joke is on me as much as anybody.

MAR. I think we ought to congratulate Miss Shadrach on her talent as an actress.

PEN. And *I* ought to be grateful for such an appreciative audience; which I *am*. (*She makes an elaborate bow, while the others applaud.*)

Enter MRS. BUNN, L.

MRS. B. Luncheon is served.

ARCH. Come! Let us eat, drink and be merry.

(*Exit* MRS. BUNN, L., *followed by the others, arm in arm laughing.*)

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