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Adaptation (only slightly for 21st century) from the original, *Grande Scheme*, written by Catherine Ladd in Winnsboro, South Carolina, for the Thespian Corps in January of 1853.

By Martha Benn Macdonald, Ph.D. (from Rock Hill)

*for Palham Lykes, Esq., Director,
Fairfield Co. Museum,*

Characters:

Old Chester, a "frothy" old bachelor

Henry and Charles, Chester's nephews

William and Patrick, Irish servants of Henry and Charles

Tom, a servant to Chester

Old Michel, a fiddler

Mary and Anna, Chester's nieces

Susan and Ellen, waiting maids of Mary and Anna

Old Martha, servant to Old Chester

Act I, scene I (a room in Old Chester's house)

Old Chester (seated, reading letters and papers, a cane at his side)---Well! Young people will be young people. What a trouble! But I have it! I don't mean to be pestered with their whims and notions. My nephews SHALL marry my nieces. It was a Grand Scheme. I've kept them a part. They have not seen each other for ten years (reads from a letter). Well! Here's a letter from them. The girls don't want to come back. Humph! Nor do the boys! Maybe they have fallen in love. It won't do. They shall marry each other, or they shan't have a penny. Hey Day! They set themselves up to choose for themselves. Ain't I older and don't I know better what is for their interest? Pshaw! It's my Grand Scheme. I'll make them happy in spite of themselves. (Calls) Tom.....Tom

Tom (from outside)---Coming...I bee's coming, Sir (enters).

Chester---Tom, can you be a smart boy? But I think sometimes you're more knave than fool.

Tom (bowing)—I thank ye, Maister.

Chester-Silence! I want you to listen and not talk back. Can you keep quiet?

Tom—It's noa that ye'll hear me. I'll be like a bell without a clapper.

Chester—Well, you were recommended to me as an honest lad, so I took you into service and another reason is that you are not acquainted about the town and won't go gabbling and running about.

Tom—Noa, I bee's.

Chester---Silence! I want you to listen, Rascal, and not answer me when you are not asked a question.

Tom—I bee's silent, for sure.

Chester (annoyed)—Will you be silent, Rascal?

Tom—Yes, I bee's.

Chester (raises his cane)---Silence!

Chester—O Lordy. Maister, it's noa I speaking.

Chester---Now another word and you'll feel my stick. My nephews will be here today, and so will my nieces from the country. Do you understand?

Tom—Yes....I be understand it all.

Chester---The two girls will stay next door at Mrs. Grant's. The young folks have not seen each other since they were children. The boys I've kept in Dublin and the young ladies in Yorkshire, but I mean they shall marry each other. "It's my Grand Scheme." Do you understand me?

Tom—Yes, Sir. I do for sure.

Chester---Now I think they've each taken another notion....and want to choose for themselves.

Tom—Very ^{loikly} likely, Sir. I be doing that very often till I seed Peggy. Then I stuck to her.

Chester—Listen to me, Sirrah. You must be silent and watch the boys. Tell me all you see and hear.

Tom (trying hard)-It's noa I can do that, Maister. I can't talk and noa say a word.

Chester---Fool! I mean be silent to the boys. Now go and sent up the old woman whom I engaged last night to stay in Martha's place (exit Tom and enter "old" woman who pretends to be deaf). No prattling now. Poor Old Martha. It was hard to part with her...if it is for a short time. Well, Pshaw, I'll take her back when the young folks get married. After all, old Martha nursed them when my sister died and would help them to rebel. Pshaw, my old eyes are getting

weak. I'll make my nieces and nephews happy, for they must fall in love with each other. It is, after all, part of my "Grand Scheme."

(Tom re-enters, followed by old Martha with a very large bonnet on her head, cloak or shawl, her face a little distance from Old Chester).

Chester—You are the old woman whom I employed last night, I suppose?

Tom—Your Honor, noa remembers the old woman is as dif as a door nail.

Chester. Sure enough. I had forgotten. (hollers) Can you be faithful silent?

Martha—Ye honor may depend on me (she's loud).

Chester—Good Heavens! But I suppose deaf people don't know how loud they talk. Now I want you to wait on two young ladies. You will stay next door at Mrs. Grant's. No letter carrying. Do you understand? I must know all that happens. Do you really hear and understand what I say?

Martha (very loud) —Yr' Honor need not fear me. I'll be a very Lynx. Good day.

Chester—You shall be well paid. If no one sees them without my knowledge, except the ones I intend for them to marry, why. Tom, take the old woman to Mrs. Grant's (Old Martha exits). My Scheme it's my Grand Scheme. Tom...Tom, tell the old woman to say to the girls that I'll be there as soon as they arrive...So, Tom, do let me know when the coach comes in.

Tom---Yes, sir, but they bees cumed, for I was looking at the Great coach when you first called..I seed it sure, and then the two Ladied cumed out.

Chester—Why did you not tell me, Sirrah?

Tom—You noa axed...so..

Chester---Well, I am looking for the young men every moment.

Tom—They be cumed too.

Chester---Stupid Dolt, why did you not tell me that.

Tom---I noa nowed it my own self till I went to go down and I seed two fine looking locky-like Lords a cumin, sir (noise without)—Lordy Mercy, that bees them a cumin up (Old Chester gathers up his papers and puts them in his pocket).

Boys---Where's Uncle Chester?

Chester—Run, Tom. Show them up here. Oh, the two young dogs won't want to marry, but I'll make them. After all. it's my "Grand Scheme." (Tom exits, and the boys enter).

Henry—You look as well, Uncle, as you did when I left you ten years ago.

Charles—I wonder some of the girls did not fall in love with you. Uncle...I'm surprised we're not meeting a good aunt to welcome us on our return home from Ireland.

Chester—So you thought I'd be married? Eh??? Oh you young dogs. But I've been getting wives for you both.

Charles (aside to Henry, yet loud enough for audience to hear)---Devilish kin!!

Henry (to Charles)—He might have saved himself the trouble.

Chester—Did you not get my letter, Boys?

Henry—(mimicking tone)—Did you not get ours. Uncle, saying we preferred choosing for ourselves?

Charles—Indeed, Uncle, you surely would not expect...

Chester (interrupting)---Indeed, but I DO expect you to marry the Girls I've chosen for you, or I'll disinherit you both. Yes. You shan't have a cent of my money, nor a cent that was left to you. You don't know it was left at MY disposal. Eh! No...no...It's my "Grand Scheme."

Henry (aside again)---Deuce take the "Grand Scheme."

Charles—Would you have us marry girls we never saw? Besides, I do not wish to marry. My cousin may be more in the Humour, but...not I.

Henry—Not a whit! I positively prefer staying with you, Uncle, and talking to my cousins, Mary and Anna. Ah, poor Anna. I did love her once (walks away from Charles), and if it had not been for that little witch in Yorkshire....

Chester—What are you muttering about? Eh....but I'll give you my word you shan't know any thing about your cousins, for I mean to make them marry, too. It's all part of my "Grand Scheme."

Henry—You do not surely mean to force my cousins, as well as ourselves, to lead a life of misery with some disagreeable wretch. You must surely have forgotten that you are almost our Parent.

Chester (mimicking Henry)---A life of misery with some disagreeable wretch! (hears a noise, shuffles papers). Monstrous fine! Dictate to your Uncle. Did you ever lack for money, you extravagant scamps? Have you not been wandering in England these three weeks when I ordered you home. Say....haven't I always indulged you in everything? And now...not got wives for you, so as to save you the trouble. You must make as much "prep" as if I had read

your death warrant. I'll NOT have my "Grand Scheme" knocked in the head in this way by two fools of Boys. You shall marry tomorrow, or I'll turn you both out of doors (Chester exits).

Henry—What's to be done, Charles? Here's a to-do...and poor Mary and Anna must also be victims of my uncle's "Grand Scheme," as he calls it. Heigh-ho! I wonder where my Uncle has them.

Charles—I don't know, Henry.

Henry—Well, I've been thinking.

Charles—So have I.

Henry—Of what?

Charles—That we are two fools.

Henry—Pshaw.

Charles—Do you remember ten years ago when we parted from Mary and Anna?

Henry—Yes.. We cried like school-boys and swore eternal love to our little cousins.

Charles—But I really loved my Cousin Mary.

Henry—And I my Cousin Anna, but for our unluckily falling in love in Yorkshire, I would hunt them out and carry them off like a true knight and a Jig for my uncle's "Grand Scheme."

Charles—It was unfortunate we did not return home....those little Gipsey-looking fair ones we saved from having their necks broke have stolen all the heart I had to give.

Henry—That is the natural consequence of Horses running away...Ladies fainting...and two young Gallants as ourselves ready to save them.

Charles—Well! The Dream is over (sighing). We cannot seek them as Beggars. I am really glad that we did not tell them our true names (Chester puts his head in and listens, then comes in).

Chester—Boys. Come to your senses, yet your wives, that is to be, will be here to be introduced to you by 4 o'clock (withdraws).

Charles—I've half a mind to see them. What say you?

Henry—With all my heart, we have some money and can leave tonight...As to marrying against my will...I'll be transported to Botany Bay first. Oh, what a "Grand Scheme."

Charles—And I'll seek a home among the (Peris) at the Bottom of the Blue Sea before I'll marry a woman I cannot love.

Henry---This, I think, is our old Room (opens door and exits)

ACT I, scene 2—a room in Mrs. Grant's house (Enter Chester and servant)

Chester---Tell Mrs. Grant to send the two young ladies to me that came this morning in the Coach.

Servant—Yes, Sir (exits)

Chester (laughing)—Grand Scheme...Neither knows that their cousins have arrived. The Boys think, I suppose, that I mean to marry them to some old witches for their money, and the Girls will go into hysterics. But it won't do...they shant know each other when they meet. It's a "Grand Scheme" (laughing). Oh, I've kept those Girls in Yorkshire. They've never seen such fine-looking fellows as Charles and Henry. They must fall in love at first sight...but they shan't know it is their Cousins till they meet. No...I don't think I'll let them know. Yes, I will, too. Poor things. Egad, there they come (looking out) and as beautiful as two little canaries (enter Mary and Anna, both speaking).

✦ Mary and Anna---Dear Uncle! How glad we are to see you (Chester watches both, and they all come forward).

Chester—How you've grown since I was in Yorkshire last, so I suppose the next thing will be a Husband...But I have one ready for each of you. Eh! (girls look at each other and turn away, alarmed). . Hey day....what's the matter? Not frightened at the name of a husband. Why they are two of the finest-looking fellows in all of Old England.

➤ Mary—But I do not wish to get married, Uncle.

Anna—Nor do I, Uncle. We want to live at home with you.

Chester---But I don't want you. I mean you shall marry tomorrow morning.

—Mary—Never, Uncle. I'll die first. I'll not marry a man I cannot love.

Anna—Nor I, Uncle. You may turn us into the street to starve.

Chester—Hoy te toy te...Here's a to do. But I can tell you it is not easy dying or starving as you think. You got to marry! It's my "Grand Scheme."

—Mary—I suppose some Miser wants us for our youth...or some Titled spend thrift for our money!

Chester—Eh: Who told you that you had any money? I'll disinherit you. All your property is at my disposal. If you do not marry to please me, why I'll send you to some Convent in France. If you don't marry them I want, you shan't marry them I don't want, so begone and send the old woman to me that I sent to stay with you (exit Mary and Anna in a bad humor) (Chester

continues talking)—Things have come to a pretty "state"---Girls only 18 must choose for themselves...Those two Girls were the twin children of my poor sister Mary...How much like their Mother they looked when she couldn't have her way in everything! Pshaw, but I won't be moved. It was the wish of my two half brothers...fathers of Charles and Henry, also my sister's wish for the children to marry each other. It shall be...it's been my "Grand Scheme" ever since...and if they won't help me out with it...I'll do it all myself. I'll make them Happy in spite of themselves. They choose???? Why what's Old England coming to? The King himself can't choose & now every Upstart boy of twenty-one and girls of Eighteen must have a choice (enter Old Martha with a cap on...with long frill....spectacles and shawl—Chester to her)—Hey, what's them you've got on?

Martha—(very loud)—What did you say, Sir?

Chester (starting)—I forgot again. What have you got them things on for...and that awful bed-curtain around your cap for?

Martha (very loud)---I've weak eyes, your Honor.

Chester—Have the girls seen any one yet? I mean any Gentlemen?

Martha (very loud)---No, your Honor. They ain't seen any gentlemen. They've only seen you....(knock at door).

Chester—Who's that?

Tom---It only bee's I.

Chester ---Come in! (enter Tom). Well, what do you want?

Tom---Why you seed as how the young girls have serving men of their own and I noa wanting....I just thought you'd be a wanting I for a moment.

Chester—No...Go back. I want you to follow them Gallants at my house and always keep close enough to see and hear all that goes on...Do you understand, Sirrah? I told so before.

Tom—Yes, I do understand (aside to audience)—and means to keep close all I hears, too. They've given me money (exits).

Chester---(to Martha, very loud)—Now come close and listen to me (Martha goes to Chester and puts her ear down to him). Not so close! (Chester draws back. Martha raises her head. Chester hands her a key)...This is the key that opens the gate between Mrs. Grant's garden and mine. Bring the Girls in, and be sure to come in the back way. They must be in the Parlor by 4 o'clock. Nobody must see them (Martha takes the key and turns to go). Have the girls brought their maids with them?

Martha (loud)—Yes, Sir.

Chester (loud)—Then bring them, too. They will be safer at my House. Mind now what I say (exit).

Martha—(loud). Yes Sir.

Chester (even louder)—Then bring them, too. They will be safer at my house. Mind now what I say (exits).

Martha (talking to herself, perhaps walking about)---Well! I'm glad we've got this key. Poor children..going to marry them to God only knows who...That is the reason he sent me to the country to stay a month. I thought something was hatching up here. His "Grand Scheme." But I'll have MY "Grand Scheme, too. He wanted me away that he might break their poor hearts and nobody here to pity me, but I'll outscheme him. If I could only find out who he means to marry them to..poor dear children! But I know it is to the men that's come to his house that he was talking to Tom about, but I'll match him...see if I don't, but we'll be off to the house directly. Oh, what a "Grand Scheme" (exit Martha quickly).

Act 2, Scene 1 (Garden back of Chester's house..Enter Mary and Anna followed by Susan and Ellen and Martha)

Mary (with a letter in her hands)---Now, let me see what this letter says (reading)...My dear Nieces, it is my orders that you be in the parlour by 4 o'clock..The Gentlemen that you are to meet are no other than your cousins Charles and Henry.

Anna—Oh Henry...I did love Henry.

Mary—Poor Charles—I would have married him, had I never met Evelyn. I will not deceive Charles.

Anna—I wondered if the foolish nothings of our childhood have grown up with them. Ten years since we parted..Now our little hearts did love each other...Ah! Mary, if they look as they did when Boys..I fear it would shake our loves for Evelyn and Montague.

Mary—Our faith is pledged to them, Anna; till I'm convinced they are false, I will not consent to marry any other if it is my cousin.

Martha—But now that you know it is the boys, God bless them, you have only to say that you don't want to marry. They would not vex your little hearts a moment...not them!

Mary—But, Martha, you know ^{when} where my Uncle has set his mind upon a thing, he is obstinate in it, and perhaps Charles and Henry may also be in favor ~~it~~ of it. Ah...me...I wish I knew what they look like living so long in Ireland. _{of}

"Martha coming in"

Martha—The dear Boys, I know, have grown up as handsome as they were when Children.

Anna—Well, at any rate, I will not marry Henry.

Mary—Nor I Charles. My Uncle hates what he calls Fops and Fools, that is, in English a handsome man. Now I am certain they cannot be probable, or he would not praise them so much.

Anna—If my Uncle had ever let us correspond, I could have told by their letters if they had changed.

Mary—Had I known what part of Ireland they were in, I would have written. Do you think, Anna, that they knew where we were?

Anna—No. Uncle said he sent them to Ireland to learn them the Brogue. Only think of a Husband saying Anna... "Ma dare..or be aisy love (laughing)—

Mary—Pshaw! It's no time to laugh, but I mean to see them without being seen. If they be not changed, we can trust them with our secret.

Anna—How will you do that, Mary?

Mary—Let us get Ellen and Susan to receive them in our places. They can have no recollection of us. Our door opens on the parlour, and we can hear all that's said.

Anna—There you are sighing. I expect they have grown up great rough Irishman..(meaning Irishmen) Bah!

Anna—Ah! Mary, if it had not been for the runaway scabble of our Horses in Yorkshire, we would never have met Evelyn and Montague..

Mary—Well, Anna, there's no use talking of what's past. Ellen, what do you and Susan think of our Scheme. Can you see them in your places?

Ellen—Yes, Mar'm, we'll do anything you wish.

Mary—What do you say to it, Susan?

Susan—I'll try, Ma'am, but I'm afraid I'll laugh.

Anna—Never fear. We'll train you til the time comes.

Ellen—It's mighty queer. Folks can't be shamed of who they want for themselves.

Mary—Well! Come along. We'll tell you what to say (Mary and Anna follow Ellen and Susan).

Martha—Now, there they go. If I could see Master Charles and Henry, why I'd tell them every word after all this preparation. Maybe they don't want the girls neither. Now only think of their believing that the boys looked like great raw Irishmen. If I can only see them. I'll stop all this "Grand Scheming." I will...I be bound for it. I will." (Charles and Henry come in).

Charles—I thought I heard someone speaking.

Henry—It was but the echo of our voices or perchance the ^{Sylvan}~~Sylvan~~ notes of the sweet ones who have come to charm us into matrimony.

Charles—Preposterous! What can my Uncle mean, but I am resolved to start tonight...bid adieu to my sweet little wood nymphs in Yorkshire. Then seek my fortune in the wide world (sighing). Or if she could be content with a poor devil of a student like me, why I'll take her at once.

Henry—Yes, and make the old saying true, "When Poverty enters the door...Love flies out the window." Yet I've half a mind to do the same thing myself....What are you thinking of, Charles?

Charles—Trying to picture to myself what kind of wives my uncle has chosen for us. Let us at any rate see them.

Henry—With all my heart. But I'd nearly long after that, foolish boy, that Uncle has. He brought me a letter a few minutes ago (takes letter and reads). My dear nephews, I won't vex you any longer. The girls you are to meet are no other than your loving cousins, Mary and Anna.

Charles---Good Heavens, what's to be done now?

Henry (reading on)---Be in the parlor by 4 o'clock to see the little Dears you are to marry in the morning.

Charles (whistles, as Henry reads on).

Henry---I cannot be home till after night, Charles.

Charles--And I am devilish glad of it. What's to be done?

Henry—Poor Anna, but suppose the affections of our childhood have grown up with them???

Charles—Pshaw—all nonsense. Uncle has had them buried somewhere in the country, and I dare swear that they are bouncing rosy cheeked awkward country babies. Uncle disliked city belles. Heavens, what a situation!

Henry—Hush, Charles. Such an Idea would be profanity. Two months ago, we would have been delighted at the idea only of meeting Mary and Anna, but taking them and becoming Benedicts at once...

Charles—Circumstances alter cases. I have since fallen in ^{love} _^.

Henry—My case is as bad as yours. At all events, I mean to see them and not be seen.

Charles—How?

Henry—Get Patrick and William to personate us. In our Room open on the parlor...we can see and hear all that transpires.

Charles (laughing)—Our Representatives would not be very likely to win the hearts of our fair cousins with the Brogue. To them to play them such a trick!!!!

Henry—The brogue will excite no suspicion. We have been in Ireland ~~ten~~ years, and Uncle will not be at home.

Charles—Should our little cousins have grown up as beautiful as they were when Children, I fear it would shake our allegiance to the fair ones of Yorkshire.

Henry—The dreams of our boyhood ^{are} ~~is~~ over and we have come to the realities of life, but what say you to the Scheme?

Charles—Excellent, and as Uncle is so scheming, it may please him.

Henry (calling)—Patrick...William (the servants enter).

Henry (continuing)—Well, Boys, you have learned by this time that our Uncle means to have us married, whether we will or no.

Patrick—We've heard the same, please ye Honor and it's mighty inconvenient at all...at all...to have a wife given till ye...barring no choice as ad am of ould hand.

Charles—The ladies are our cousins, and we want to see them without being seen.

William—And so y'r Honor will be after taking a glance at the servants before ye be for saying for better or worse.

Charles—Exactly so..and we want you to meet them for us.

Patric—And are we to count the secret jewels? And look at them as born ladies?

Henry—No...no. You must be very distant and polite.

Charles—Mind..Do not forget that they are our our Cousins.

William—It takes an Irishman to be polite. Och!!!If you've seen us when we used to go over to Mrs. O' Flanigan's!

Charles—Never mind Mrs. O’ Flanigan’s. Come along. We will teach you what to say.

Henry—It’s nearly time to meet them. Let’s be off (they exit, and Tom comes on).

Tom—Noa a fool and if this be ant the darndest, queerest, complication doing, but ...Tom’s noa a fool.. Them young chaps a given me a this to sundown the Street a bit for um it’s a power o’ money. I’ll get more afore I’ve done and then I’ll go and get Peggy if she neva gave time.....Tom’s neva a fool...didn’t I see them chaps in Yorkshire where Maister sent I with a letter to the old lonely Mrs. Patterson and then didn’t Maister say, “ Tom as it’s noa being but a short distance from your old home. You mean to step o’er a bit and see them. Thom’s noa blind and if I don’t have Peggy afore a monty...but I didn’t tell Maister all I seed in Yorkshire...Now the young leddies and them Chaps...but means Tom.....Y’e a cut lad, yes...I know I’ll alter Peggy afore a month..Yees, afore a week...Yees afore two days (Tom exits, sort of laughing, assuring himself).

ACT 2, scene 2

(parlour of “Chester’s house)

- Mary –You mind now, Ellen, as I told you.

Ellen-Yes, Mam.

Anna---And you, Susan, don’t forget a word. We must leave you.

↳ Mary— Mind you don’t look too shy nor don’t laugh.

Anna—Never fear us. You’d better sit down now. Don’t forget a word we have told you, or they may find you out.

Ellen—We’ve got it all by heart, Mam.(Mary and Anna exit).

Susan-- Suppose they were to court us right now. Oh, mercy, and they such fine looking Gentleman.

Ellen—Oh, Lorda Mercy, Susan..you’ve scared the very heart out of me into my mouth. I’ve clean forgot all I had to say.

Susan—Lorda, Mercy. There they must be coming now. Oh, Ellen. I’m trembling all over, and....

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(enter Patrick and William from door, scraping and bowing awkwardly...Susan and Ellen twist about, their faces confused).

William (to Patrick)—Faith, Patrick, and why don't ya speak?

Patrick (aside)—Because the half the Maister tould me is clain gone, but here goes for it.

William ---Don't forget they're to be our kin.

Patrick- (to Susan and Ellen)—Faith and its ourselves that'ts glad to see ye...and ye'r looking as bright as a morning in May and as plump as Partridges that grace the Lord Mayor's table on St. Patrick's Day (Susan touches Ellen).

Susan (aside)—Why don't you say something?

William—Won't yer Leddyship be after taking a seat? (all sit in front).

Patrick—Be the powers, it's a long time since we've seen ye, and how do you like living in the country?

Susan—It's a powerful more livelier place than this. I am sartain of that, tho we only come today.

William (aside to Patrick)—They don't spake, like they were mighty proud at all....at all..

Patrick—Ye may well say that same, for I think it's down enough, and we haven't sanc the face of a ledy worth looking at till we see y'r own pretty jewels of faces.

Susan (to Ellen)—If they ain't going to make love?

Ellen—Hush! (aloud to Patrick). Love me, ye can talk all that sorter talk, and we won't mind ye a bit because ye are only our cousins.

William—Faith and by the same, we would have been axing ye for a kiss?

Patrick—(to William)—Ye Shalpeen (ask about this word on p. 25 of original)---Don't be forgetting that they are born leddies.

William—Wouldn't yer leddyships like a bit of a turn in the Garden? It's maty dull a satting here—we'll tell ye a bit about ould Ireland.

Susan—We don't care (all this time, Charles and Henry are peeping in from one door, and Mary and Anna from the other---they exit as party of servants rises)...

Patrick—Won't ye take me arm? I musn't forget they are ladies (exit)

Anna—Oh, Mercy, I am ready to cry and my cousins were such pretty boys.

~ Mary—Ah me! I had begun to fear I should love them more than mere Cousins, but such Boobies...

Anna—That's been one of Uncle's "Grand Schemes." He was always railing after the folly of the day.

~ Mary—But it was too bad, Anna, to bury them in the wildest part of Ireland with some old Irish sailor...and then bring them here to us for husbands. Heavens, I would rather he had imported two wild Hottentots for us (sighing).

Anna—There's no use in sighing. Poor Montague. What's to be done?

~ Mary—Don't speak of Montague or Evelyn in the same breath with our wild cousins!

Anna—Do not say Cousins. But what's to be done?

~ Mary—Go back to Mrs. Grant's tonight. We can steal back through the garden gate. Martha promised to conceal us and say we had ran off after seeing our....Bah...I mean those Irishmen.

Anna—Martha was so sure they looked as they did when boys.

~ Mary—Uncle will never think of searching in the house for us, and as to...I won't say cousins. well they can take Ellen and Susan. They seemed most fascinated with them than they could possibly have been with us. (exit Mary and Anna and enter Charles and Henry, laughing).

Charles---How can you laugh, Henry? This is, I suppose, one of Uncle's "Grand Schemes." They were such sweet little girls. It was too bad to take them and bury them in some uncultivated part of England. Twas Murder, Murder most foul. Positively in the first degree!

Henry—I was trying to steel my heart against the charms of my little cousins, when two such rosy-bouncing laps, ha---ha.

Charles—Henry, I'll be angry if you laugh again. It's too much, and ain't they our cousins?

Henry—And to be using...

Charles---Never...hanging, drowning..anything would be preferable.

Henry—Well, they seemed to fancy Patrick and William, and I for one will give up all claim.

Charles—Stop, Henry. You have forgotten that they are our relations. I would not have them stoop.

Henry—Stoop. I think our Uncle has made them do that, Charles.

Charles (walks about, agitated). My sweet little cousins. I cannot bear to think of it.

Henry—You know Uncle don't like the delicate ladies of the day. Buxom ladies for him. He thought we might prefer them, too, when he brought us such fine specimens.

Charles—No wailing, Henry. I cannot bear it.

Henry—What do you mean to do?

Charles—Be off tonight. We each have 500 pounds.

Henry—And to Yorkshire.

Charles—Yes.. We can bid them adieu.

Henry—Then. Let us ^{reconitre} reconitre the town. We can be off by the day light coach.

Charles''It's now dark, so I'll go..If I should meet Uncle, I could not keep any temper.

ACT III, scene i

(in the street in front of Chester's house. Tom comes in)

Tom—I bee's in luck....Lau...there be the two gens coming out of Maister's garden, and I'll just stand back here a little (he watches as Charles and Henry come in).

Henry—It cannot be, Charles.

Charles—But I am not mistaken. When you left me in the Garden to go back to the house, I chanced to look up to the window of the next house.

Henry—How could you distinguish them?

Charles—There was a brilliant light on the table somewhere by the window, and they were standing full in the light.

Henry—It must be a mistake. We left them in Yorkshire but two days ago.

Charles—Love has keen eyes, Henry.

Henry—So I should think...contrary to the old maxim that it was blind. But I hope the little God will not lead us astray this time (turns and sees Tom).

Charles---Ah, there's uncle's Yorkshire bumpkin (to Tom) who lives in that house next to Uncle's (pointing to Mrs. Grant's).

Tom—Don't noa, sur (aside), mum, Tom.

Charles—Is there any young ladies living there?

Tom—I be seed two get out there today.

Charles—Do you know their names?

Tom—Noa.

Henry—Stupid dolt, but couldn't you find our or carry a letter to them?

Tom—I bees cute enough when I bees paid.

Charles—You shall have money and a double reward, too, if you can get an answer.

Henry—But admit that it is our fair ones from Yorkshire. How will you direct the letter?

Charles—I expect they were nieces of that old Mrs. Patterson they lived with in England...I never asked.

Henry—Nor I.. The dear names of Rosa and Ida was a (coagnomen) sweet enough for me.

Charles—Let us go in and write the letter and a Jig for the old man’s “Grand Scheme.” (Tom capers after them...door of Mrs. Grant’s opens, and Mary peeps out and looks about).

→Mary—Anna, I tell you it was Montague and Evelyn. I saw them distinctly as they passed the lamp just a moment ago. I really thought that fool Tom was behind them.

Anna—How unfortunate we never told them our right names, but I was afraid of their sending some note over to us, and if the old lady Patterson had got it, she wouldn’t have been none the wiser.

→Mary—It was still more unfortunate our being brought away the day they left.

Anna—Quick from the door. Mary, I hear someone coming

(girls disappear, as Charles and Henry enter, followed by Tom).

Charles---Now, Tom, take this letter. Mind you see the two young ^ldadies that came today and wait for an answer.

Tom-I bees sure (aside). Tom noa fail. Won’t I get Peggy? (tries to turn bolt of Mrs. Grant’s door).

Henry---Very true.

Charles—Well. The die is cast, but what could have brought them here?

Henry—I expect the Old Lady found out they had seen us and so packed them off to some old Hag of a Duenna here to keep them in “durance vile.”

Charles—I told Patrick and William to fly with all speed and get 4 fleet horses and a light chaise and be at your corner in ten minutes.

Henry-How long he stay? (looks around). Suppose they do not accede to our proposals.

Charles—It can be no harm to try. The chaise we will want. We must leave town for a while and so escape the first Ebullition of Uncle’s passion _____ when he finds his “Grand Scheme” has exploded.” (Tom enters).

Charles—Come here by the lamp post, Henry (Henry opens letter and reads).

Charles (impatiently). Read it out, Henry.

Henry—Read it yourself then. Charles.

Charles—So they are like ourselves, about to be forced into a hateful marriage.

Henry—But they do not say who with.

Charles—No matter, they will be with us in a few moments and then Ho for “Gretna Green.”
(Mary and Anna appear with veil over their heads).

Henry—(to Anna)—Dearest, have we, indeed, met again?

Charles (to Mary)—Oh, Mary, only two days since we parted and it seems an age.

Anna—Montague should we be pursued?

Henry—Never fear, dearest. I will have fleet horses. Draw your veils, so that you cannot be seen.

Charles—Now, Henry, let's be in haste. The chaise will be at the place by the time we get there (all start). Sure enough (throws a purse to Tom).

Tom (looking after them)—Well, if that beant the softest trick (laughing). Tom's noa the fool now. Well, they've given Tom a power of money, but mum Tom. I be see through it all the time. Now I be going to run to tell Old Maister. The birds be flown from Mrs. Grant's. Then, he'll be all fired mad, but I needn't say who they be gone with. Noa, if I does that, we won't noa ride and I be powerful tired of staying here. I, I bees a cute chap. I know them new names. I bees in luck sure, and I'll ha Peggy. (exits, singing and dancing a jig).

ACT 3, Scene 2 (inside of Chester's House. Chester is sitting at tables—candles lighted)

Chester—Why, how still everything is. Where can the Boys be... (.gets up and opens doors). Nobody there. I'd give something to know how they liked each other... couldn't help it... fell right in love and gone I dare swear to Mrs. Grant's with them. I meant they should be happy in spite of themselves. Lucky dog two weddings tomorrow. It was part of a “Grand Scheme.” Tom....Tom. Where can he be....everybody gone. Tom, Tom, I say.

Tom—Oh, Maister, Maister. Such a mishap... oh Lorda, Lorda..

Chester (excited)—What's the matter? Speak, Rascal.

Tom—As I bees cuming down the street a watching them, as you told me to watch, I seed... Oh... Lorda.

Chester—What did you see?

Tom—Oh, me...I seed them young ladies a cumin today and over at Mrs. Grant's.

Chester—What of my nieces? Speak out, or I'll break every bone in your body to pieces (takes hold of Chester).

Tom—Oh, Orda. Don't hurt I...I only seed them a getting into a great Po Sha and

Chester—Speak fast..and what?

Tom—And two Gents...the men called...

Chester-I'll kill the Rascal (shakes Tom)---called what?

Tom— Oh me, oh Lorda, Maister. I bees run all the way to tell you. Oh Murder if you kills I...what's to become of poor Peggy?

Chester—Confound Peggy and you, too. What was the names of the Fellows my nieces went with? It must be some of them chaps that followed them from Yorkshire. But their names, Rascal.

Tom—I stood close to the Po Sha and I heard em call one Maister Montiscrew and the other Maister Weberlin. I've been a saying it all the way, I be running back.

Chester---Where's my nephews? Rascal, where are they, eh?

Tom—Oh, Master, they run and left...I took and seed them get in a great PoSha, too. I was a running to tell you when I seed them others and.

Chester---That's enough (walks around). Was ever an old man so plagued. All the Scheme of my life gone. But they shan't have a cent left to them. I'll build Hospitals, anything and let them go. Butno...they shan't....I'll right after them and tell all I've got to say...Not a cent shall they have. I'll....but never mind. You are the only faithful one in the house. Here's the money. When I come back, you may go for Peggy. (gives Tom money to hold).

Tom (aside)---Beant I cute?

Chester—Now go, Tom. Put 4 of the best horses to the chaise, and we'll start at once, but where's the old Witch I sent to watch the girls and their maids.

Tom—They bees all down stairs.

Chester—Send them up quick (exit Tom). I'll catch the Death and Furies. I'll search England, but I'll find them (enter Susan, Ellen, Martha, still disguised, followed by Tom).

Chester (loud)---Hey, old Jezebel, what's become of my nieces?

Martha—(loud)—Don't call me names. but I'll let you know when Birds don't like their cages. they ain't so easily kept without bars.

Chester---Where's your young mistresses? Who they have they gone off with?

Who has followed them up here?

Susan—Saw, sir? I don't know.

Ellen—Indeed, sir..we just now swiped them from Mrs. Grant's and run here to find them.

Chester---I'll make you all (tries to remain calm), but I won't do anything more...I'll have you all together. Yes. You shall all follow me, and I'll have you all hung, drowned, murdered all together. By the laws of Old England you shall, every one of you, be punished. I'll see if a Guardian can't make young folks that don't know their own minds do what is right. Get ready in a moment all three of you. Begone I say (drives them off). When I catch them, they shall not say a word. No, they shan't plead. They shant look at me...No if they speak, I won't hear. Oh, my "Grand Scheme." I must get ready. Hurry, Tom...Oh, how I long to put my hands on them). (Chester exits).

Tom—I hope he'll neva put his hands on em, as he did on me. Now I must get the Po Sha ready. I'll lead Old Maister right after them. I be wanting a ride powerful bad...Maister, when he finds them, will noa be mad and I'll just ax him to let me have the house, and I'll keep right on for Peggy. I bees a cute lad. I be see through it all, and Old Martha, too. (Tom laughs)...Doan't she look? (shakes money in his pockets)---Now for the Po Sha. Catch them, and then for Peggy (exits).

ACT 4 (view of the country, a cottage at the side, peasants there, including Old Michel with a fiddle)

Peasant one—Now, old Mike. give us a tune. (Mike plays fiddle).

Peasant 2—I wonder who all them folks are that stopped at the Cottage for breakfast.

Peasant one—Runaway Match, I warrant.

Peasant 2—What's that coming?

Peasant 1—It's a broken down chaise, and the people are walking. The chaise has stopped.

Mike—Somebody after them runaways there (points)

Peasant one—It can't be! People don't hunt runaways and carry a parcel of women along.

Mike—How many be coming?

Chester---Yex, minxes, ain't that Charles and Henry (enter Patrick and William at same time Charles and Henry see Susan and Ellen).

Mary (pointing to Patrick and William)---I thought those were

Charles (laughing)---And we took them for our cousins.

Chester (laughing)---I see how it is... You've been playing Bo Peep (laughing again). Run away with your own wives to keep from getting married. Hurrah for my Grand Scheme (sees Tom)...Hey, Rascal. How came you to tell such tales?

Tom---Don't touch I, now Maister. I seed they all loved a Grand Scheme, and Ibeant the chap to stop the fun.

Chester---I'm too happy to trouble now (turning to nieces). But I've a mind not to let you have each other. Now, I've got a great mind.

Charles---to let us all be happy.

Chester---Well, it's the happiest day of my life, and we'll have a merry one. Tell the peasant fiddlers to strike up. But where shall I get a partner?

(Old Martha takes off her disguise, and Chester sees her).

Chester (takes Martha's hand for dance)---Now, for the Music for the dance. Caps and Hurrah for Old England.

Curtain!