

Audition Piece for Augustus Coverly

Augustus: Lord Byron?! – He claimed my hare, although my shot was the earlier! He said I missed by a hare’s breadth. His conversation was very facetious. But I think Lord Byron will not marry you, Thom, for he was only lame and not blind.

Septimus: Peace! Peace until a quarter to twelve. It is intolerable for a tutor to have his thoughts interrupted by pupils.

Augustus: You are not my tutor, sir. I am visiting your lesson by my free will.

Septimus: If you are so determined, my lord.

Augustus: Your peace is nothing to me, sir. You do not rule over me.

Thomasina: Augustus!

Septimus: I do not rule here, my lord. I inspire by reverence for learning and the exaltation of knowledge whereby man may approach God. There will be a shilling for the best cone and pyramid drawn in silence by a quarter to twelve *at the earliest*.

Augustus: You will not buy my silence for a shilling, sir. What I know to tell is worth much more than that. (*throwing down his book and pencil, he leaves the room*)

..... *Later. Augustus appears at the garden door, his manner cautious and diffident*

Augustus: Sir ...

Septimus: My lord?

Augustus: I gave you offense, sir, and I am sorry for it.

Septimus: I took none, my lord, but you are kind to mention it.

Augustus: I would like to ask you a question, Mr Hodge. (*Pause*) You have an elder brother, I dare say, being a Septimus?

Septimus: Yes, my lord. He lives in London. He is the editor of a newspaper, the *Piccadilly Recreation*. (*Pause*) Was that your question?

Augustus: (*embarrassed about something, picks up the drawing of Septimus*) No. Oh ... it is you? ... I would like to keep it. There are things a fellow cannot ask his friends. Carnal things. My sister has told me ... my sister believes such things as I cannot, I assure you, bring myself to repeat.

Septimus: You must not repeat them, then. The walk between here and dinner will suffice to put us straight, if we stroll by the garden. It is an easy business. And I must rely on you to correct your sister’s state of ignorance.

Augustus: Thank you, Mr Hodge, I will.