

## **Audition Piece for Lady Croom**

*(entering from the garden)*

**Lady Croom:** Oh - excellently found! Mr Chater, this will please you very much. Lord Byron begs a copy of your new book. He dies to read it and intends to include your name in the second edition of his *English Bards and Scottish Reviewers*.

**Chater:** *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, your lady-ship, is a doggerel aimed at Lord Byron's seniors and betters. If he intends to include me, he intends to insult me.

**Lady Croom:** Well of course he does, Mr Chater. Would you rather be thought not worth insulting? You should be proud to be in the company of Rogers and Moore and Wordsworth - ah! "The Couch of Eros!" *(For she has spotted Septimus's copy of the book on the table)*.

**Septimus:** That is my copy, madam.

**Lady Croom:** So much for the better - what are a friend's books for if not to be borrowed?

Mr Hodge, you must speak to your friend and put him out of his affectation of pretending to quit us. I will not have it. He says he is determined on the Malta packet sailing out of Falmouth! His head is full of Lisbon and Lesbos, and his portmanteau of pistols, and I have told him it is not to be thought of. The whole of Europe is in a Napoleonic fit, all the best ruins will be closed, the roads entirely occupied with the movement of armies, the lodgings turned to billets and the fashion for godless republicanism not yet arrived at its natural reversion. He says his aim is poetry. One does not aim at poetry with pistols. At poets, perhaps. I charge you to take command of his pistols, Mr Hodge! He is not safe with them. His lameness, he confessed to me, is entirely the result of his habit from boyhood of shooting himself in the foot. What is that *noise*?

**Septimus:** The new Broadwood pianoforte, madam. Our music lessons are at an early stage.

**Lady Croom:** Well restrict your lessons to the *piano* side of the instrument, and let her loose on the *forte* when she has learned something.

*(Lady Croom, holding the book, sails out back into the garden)*