



From a Cornish Window

Sir Arthur Thomas Quiller-Couch

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As for the house, it is a plain one; indeed, very like the house a child draws on a slate, and therefore pleasing even externally to me, who prefer the classical to any Gothic style of architecture. Why so many strangers mistake it with its modest dimensions for a hotel, I cannot tell you. I found one in the pantry the other day searching for a brandy-and-soda; another rang the dining-room bell and dumbfounded the maid by asking what we had for lunch; and a third (a lady) cried when I broke to her that I had no sitting-room to let. We make it a rule to send out a chair whenever some unknown invader walks into the garden and prepares to make a water-colour sketch of the view. There are some, too, whose behaviour cannot be reconciled with the hallucination of a hotel, and they must take the house for a public institution of some kind, though of what kind I cannot guess. There was an extremely bashful youth, for instance, who roamed the garden for a while on the day after the late Duke of Cambridge's funeral, and, suddenly dashing in by the back door, wanted to know why our flag was not at half-mast. There was also a lady who called on the excuse that she had made a life-study of the Brontës, and after opening (in a guarded manner) that they came, originally, from somewhere in Yorkshire, desired to be informed how many servants we kept. I have sometimes thought of rechristening our house The Hotel of the Four Seasons, and thereby releasing its true name (The Haven) to a friend who covets it for his own. On the whole, however, these visitors disturb the house and the view from my window very little. The upper halves of them, as they pass up and down the road, appear above my garden wall much as the shadows that passed in Plato's cave. They come, enjoy their holiday, and go, leaving the window intent upon the harbour, its own folk and its own business.

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