

A Blue Pantomime

By Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch

I.

HOW I DINED AT THE "INDIAN QUEENS."

The sensation was odd; for I could have made affidavit I had never visited the place in my life, nor come within fifty miles of it. Yet every furlong of the drive was earmarked for me, as it were, by some detail perfectly familiar. The highroad ran straight ahead to a notch in the long chine of Huel Tor; and this notch was filled with the yellow ball of the westering sun. Whenever I turned my head and blinked, red simulacra of this ball hopped up and down over the brown moors. Miles of wasteland, dotted with peat-ricks and cropping ponies, stretched to the northern horizon; on our heft three long coombes radiated seaward, and in the gorge of the midmost was a building stuck like a fish-bone, its twisted Jacobean chimneys overtopping a plantation of ash trees that now, in November, allowed a glimpse, and no more, of the gray façade. I had looked down that coombe as we drove by; and catching sight of these chimneys felt something like reassurance, as if I had been counting, all the way, to find them there.

But here let me explain who I am and what brought me to these parts. My name is Samuel Wraxall—the Reverend Samuel Wraxall, to be precise; I was born a Cockney and educated at Rugby and Oxford. On leaving the University I had taken orders; but, for reasons impertinent to this narrative, was led, after five years of parochial work in Surrey, to accept an Inspectorship of Schools. Just now I was bound for Pitt's Scawens, a desolate village among the Cornish clay-moors, there to examine and report upon the Board School. Fiddler's Scawens lies some nine miles off the railway, and six from the nearest market-town; consequently, on hearing there was a comfortable inn near the village, I had determined to make that my resting place for the night and do my business early on the morrow.

"Who lives down yonder?" I asked my river.

"Squire Parkyn," he answered, not troubling to follow my gaze.

"Old family?"

"May be: Belonged to these parts before I can mind."

"What's the place called?"

"Tremenhuel."

I had certainly never heard the name before, nevertheless my lips were forming the syllables almost before he spoke. As he flicked up his gray horse and the gig began to oscillate in more business-like fashion, I put him a fourth question—a question at once involuntary and absurd.

"Are you sure the people who live there are called Parkyn?"

He turned his head at this, and treated me quite excusably to a stare of amazement.

"Well—considerin' I've lived in these parts five-an'-forty year, man and boy, I reckon I *ought* to be sure."

The reproof was just, and I apologized.

Nevertheless, Parkyn was not the name I wanted. What was the name? And why did I want it? I had not the least idea. For the next mile I continued to hunt my brain for the right combination of syllables. I only knew that somewhere, now at the back of my head, now on my tongue-tip,

there hung a word I desired to utter, but could not. I was still searching for it when the gig climbed over the summit of a gentle rise, and the "Indian Queens" hove in sight.

It is not usual for a village to lie a full mile beyond its inn: yet I never doubted this must be the case with Pitt's Scawens. Nor was I in the least surprised by the appearance of this lonely tavern, with the black peat-pool behind it and the high road in front, along which its end windows stare for miles, as if on the lookout for the ghosts of departed coaches full of disembodied travelers for the Land's End. I knew the sign-board over the porch; I knew—though now in the twilight it was impossible to distinguish colors—that upon either side of it was painted an Indian Queen in a scarlet turban and blue robe, taking two black children with scarlet parasols to see a blue palm-tree. I recognized the hepping-stock and granite drinking trough beside the porch; as well as the eight front windows, four on either side of the door, and the dummy window immediately over it. Only the landlord was unfamiliar. He appeared as the gig drew up—a loose-fleshed, heavy man, something over six feet in height—and welcomed me with an air of anxious hospitality, as if I were the first guest he had entertained for many years.

"You received my letter, then?" I asked.

"Yes, surely. The Rev. S. Wraxall, I suppose. You bed's aired, sir, and a fire in the Blue Room, and the cloth laid. My wife didn't like to risk cooking the fowl till you were really come. 'Railways be that uncertain,' she said. 'Something may happen to the train and he'll be done to death and all in pieces.'"

It took me a couple of seconds to discover that these gloomy anticipations referred not to me, but to the fowl.

"But if you can wait half an hour—" he went on.

"Certainly," said I. "In the meanwhile, if you'll show me up to my bedroom, I'll have a wash and change my clothes, for I've been traveling since ten this morning."

I was standing in the passage by this time, and examined it in the dusk while the landlord was fetching a candle. Yes, again: I had felt sure the staircase lay to the right. I knew by heart the Ionic pattern of its broad balusters; the tick of the tall clock, standing at the first turn of the stairs; the vista down the glazed door opening on the stable-yard. When the landlord returned with my portmanteau and a candle and I followed him upstairs, I was asking myself for the twentieth time: "When—in what stage of my soul's history—had I been doing all this before? And what on earth was that tune that kept humming in my head?"

I dismissed these speculations as I entered the bedroom and began to fling off my dusty clothes. I had almost forgotten about them by the time I began to wash away my travel-stains, and rinse the coal dust out of my hair. My spirits revived, and began mentally to arrange my plans for the next day. The prospect of dinner, too, after my cold drive, was wonderfully comforting. Perhaps (thought I) there is good wine in this inn; it is just the house wherein travelers find, or boast that they find, forgotten bins of Burgundy or Teneriffe. When my landlord returned to conduct me to the Blue Room, I followed him down to the first landing in the lightest of spirits.

Therefore, I was startled when, as the landlord threw open the door and stood aside to let me pass, *it* came upon me again—and this time not as a merely vague sensation, but as a sharp and sudden fear taking me like a cold hand by the throat. I shivered as I crossed the threshold and began to look about me. The landlord observed it, and said:

"It's chilly weather for traveling, to be sure. Maybe you'd be better downstairs in the coffee-room, after all."

I felt that this was probable enough. But it seemed a pity to have put him to the pains of lighting this fire for nothing. So I promised him I should be comfortable enough.

He appeared to be relieved, and asked me what I would drink with my dinner. "There's beer—I brew it myself; and sherry—"

I said I would try his beer.

"And a bottle of sound port to follow?"

Port upon home brewed beer! But I had dared it often enough in my Oxford days, and a long evening lay before me, with a snug armchair, and a fire fit to roast a sheep. I assented.

He withdrew to fetch up the meal, and I looked about me with curiosity. The room was a long one—perhaps fifty feet from end to end, and not less than ten paces broad. It was wainscotted to the height of four feet from the ground, probably with oak, but the wood had been so larded with dark blue paint that its texture could not be discovered. Above this wainscot the walls were covered with a fascinating paper. The background of this was a greenish-blue, and upon it a party of red-coated riders in three-cornered hats blew large horns while they hunted a stag. This pattern, striking enough in itself, became immeasurably more so when repeated a dozen times; for the stag of one hunt chased the riders of the next, and the riders chased the hounds, and so on in an unbroken procession right round the room. The window at the bottom of the room stood high in the wall, with short blue curtains and a blue-cushioned seat beneath. In the corner to the right of it stood a tall clock, and by the clock an old spinet, decorated with two plated cruets, a toy cottage constructed of shells and gum, and an ormolu clock under glass—the sort of ornament that an Agricultural Society inflicts upon the tenant of the best-cultivated farm within thirty miles of somewhere or other. The floor was uncarpeted save for one small oasis opposite the fire. Here stood my table, cleanly spread, with two plated candlesticks, each holding three candles. Along the wainscot extended a regiment of dark, leather-cushioned chairs, so straight in the back that they seemed to be standing at attention. There was but one easy-chair in the room, and this was drawn close to the fire. I turned toward it.

As I sat down I caught sight of my reflection in the mirror above the fireplace. It was an unflattering glass, with a wave across the surface that divided my face into two ill-fitting halves, and a film upon it, due, I suppose, to the smoke of the wood fire below. But the setting of this mirror and the fireplace itself were by far the most noteworthy objects in the whole room. I set myself idly to examine them.

It was an open hearth, and the blazing faggot hay on the stone itself. The andirons were of indifferently polished steel, and on either side of the fireplace two Ionic pilasters of dark oak supported a narrow mantel-ledge. Above this rested the mirror, flanked by a couple of naked, flat-cheeked boys, who appeared to be lowering it over the fire by a complicated system of pulleys, festoons, and flowers. These flowers and festoons, as well as the frame of the mirror, were of some light wood—lime, I fancy—and reminded me of Grinling Gibbons's work; and the glass tilted forward at a surprising angle, as if about to tumble on the hearth-rug. The carving was exceedingly delicate. I rose to examine it more narrowly. As I did so, my eyes fell on three letters, cut in flowing italic capitals upon a plain boss of wood immediately over the frame, and I spelt out the word *FUI*.

Fui—the word was simple enough; but what of its associations? Why should it begin to stir up again those memories which were memories of nothing? *Fui*—"I have been"; but what the dickens have I been?

The landlord came in with my dinner.

"Ah!" said he, "you're looking at our masterpiece, I see."

“Tell me,” I asked; “do you know why this word is written here, over the mirror?”

“I’ve heard my wife say, sir, it was the motto of the Cardinnocks that used to own this house. Ralph Cardinnock, father to the last squire, built it. You’ll see his initials up there in the top corners of the frame—R. C.—one letter in each corner.”

As he spoke it, I knew this name—Cardinnock—for that which had been haunting me. I seated myself at the table, saying:

“They lived at Tremenhuel, I suppose. Is the family gone?—died out?”

“Why, yes; and the way of it was a bit curious, too.”

“You might sit down and tell me about it,” I said, “while I begin my dinner.”

“There’s not much to tell,” he answered, taking a chair; “and I’m not the man to tell it properly. My wife is a better hand at it, but”—here he looked at me doubtfully—“it always makes her cry.”

“Then I’d rather hear it from you. How did Tremenhuel come into the hands of the Parkyns?—that’s the present owner’s name, is it not?”

The landlord nodded. “The answer to that is part of the story. Old Parkyn, great-great-grandfather to the one that lives there now, took Tremenhuel on lease from the last Cardinnock—Squire Philip Cardinnock, as he was called. Squire Philip came into the property when he was twenty-three: and before he reached twenty-seven, he was forced to let the old place. He was wild, they say—thundering wild; a drinking, dicing, cock-fighting, horse-racing young man; poured out his money like water through a sieve. That was bad enough: but when it came to carrying off a young lady and putting a sword through her father and running the country, I put it to you it’s worse.”

“Did he disappear?”

“That’s part of the story too. When matters got desperate and he was forced to let Tremenhuel, he took what money he could raise and cleared out of the neighborhood for a time; went off to Tregarrick when the militia was embodied, he being an officer; and there he cast his affections upon old Sir Felix William’s daughter, Miss Cicely—”

I was expecting it; nevertheless I dropped my fork clumsily as I heard the name, and for a few seconds the landlord’s voice sounded like that of a distant river as it ran on:

“And as Sir Felix wouldn’t consent—for which nobody blamed him—Squire Philip and Miss Cicely agreed to go off together one dark night. But the old man found them out and stopped them in the nick of time and got six inches of cold steel for his pains. However, he kept his girl, and Squire Philip had to fly the country. He went off that same night, they say; and wherever he went, he never came back.”

“What became of him?”

“Ne’er a soul knows; for ne’er a soul saw his face again. Year after year, old Parkyn, his tenant, took the rent of Tremenhuel out of his right pocket and paid it into his left; and in time, there being no heir, he just took over the property and stepped into Cardinnock’s shoes with a ‘by your leave’ to nobody, and there his grandson is to this day.”

“What became of the young lady—of Miss Cicely Williams?” I asked.

“Died an old maid. There was something curious between her and her only brother who had helped to stop the runaway match. Nobody knows what it was: but when Sir Felix died—as he did about ten years after—she packed up and went somewhere to the North of England and settled. They say she and her brother never spoke; which was carrying her anger at his interference rather far, specially as she remained good friends with her father.

He broke off here to fetch up the second course. We talked no more, for I was pondering his tale and disinclined to be diverted to other topics. Nor can I tell whether the rest of the meal was good or ill. I suppose I ate; but it was only when the landlord swept the cloth, and produced a bottle of port, with a plate of biscuits and another of dried raisins, that I woke out of my musing. While I drew the armchair nearer the fire, he pushed forward the table with the wine to my elbow. After this, he poured me out a glass and fell to dusting a high-backed chair with vigor, as though he had caught it standing at ease and were giving it a round dozen for insubordination in the ranks. "Was there anything more?" "Nothing, thank you." He withdrew.

I drank a couple of glasses and began meditatively to light my pipe. I was trying to piece together these words, "Philip Cardinnock—Cicely Williams—*fui*" and to fit them into the tune that kept running in my head.

My pipe went out. I pulled out my pouch, and was filling it afresh when a puff of wind came down the chimney and blew a cloud of blue smoke out into the room.

The smoke curled up and spread itself over the face of the mirror confronting me. I followed it lazily with my eyes. Then suddenly I bent forward, staring up. Something very curious was happening to the glass.

II

WHAT I SAW IN THE MIRROR.

The smoke that had dimmed the mirror's face for a moment was rolling off its surface and upward to the ceiling. But some of it still lingered in filmy, slowly revolving eddies. The glass itself, too, was stirring beneath this film and running across its breadth in horizontal waves which broke themselves silently, one after another, against the dark frame, while the circles of smoke kept widening, as the ripples widen when a stone is tossed into still water.

I rubbed my eyes. The motion on the mirror's surface was quickening perceptibly, while the glass itself was steadily becoming more opaque, the film deepening to a milky color and lying over the surface in heavy folds. I was about to start up and touch the glass with my hand, when beneath this milky color and from the heart of the whirling film, there began to gleam an underlying brilliance after the fashion of the light in an opal, but with this difference, that the light here was blue—a steel blue so vivid that the pain of it forced me to shut my eyes. When I opened them again, this light had increased in intensity. The disturbance in the glass began to abate; the eddies revolved more slowly; the smoke-wreaths faded; and as they died wholly out, the blue light went out on a sudden and the mirror looked down upon me as before.

That is to say, I thought so for a moment. But the next, I found that though its face reflected the room in which I sat, there was one omission.

I was that omission. My armchair was there, but no one sat in it.

I was surprised, but, as well as I can recollect, not in the least frightened. I continued, at any rate, to gaze steadily into the glass, and now took note of two particulars that had escaped me. The table I saw was laid for two. Forks, knives and glasses gleamed at either end, and a couple of decanters caught the sparkle of the candles in the center. This was my first observation. The second was that the colors of the hearth-rug had gained in freshness and that a dark spot just beyond it—a spot which in my first exploration I had half-amusedly taken for a blood stain—was not reflected in the glass.

As I leant back and gazed, with my hands in my lap, I remember there was some difficulty in determining whether the tune by which I was still haunted ran in my head or was tinkling from within the old spinet by the window. But after a while the music, whencesoever it came, faded away and ceased. A dead silence held everything for about thirty seconds.

And then, still looking in the, mirror, I saw the door behind me open slowly.

The next moment, two persons noiselessly entered the room—a young man and a girl. They wore the dress of the early Georgian days, as well as I could see; for the girl was wrapped in a cloak with a hood that almost concealed her face, while the man wore a heavy riding-coat. He was booted and spurred, and the backs of his top-boots were splashed with mud. I saw the backs of his boots, for he stood with his back to me, while he held open the door for the girl to pass, and at first I could not see his face.

The lady advanced into the light of the candles and threw back her hood. Her eyes were dark and frightened: her cheeks damp with rain and slightly reddened by the wind. A curl of brown hair had broken loose from its knot and hung, heavy with wet, across her brow. It was a beautiful face; and I recognized its owner. She was Cicely Williams.

With that, I knew well enough what I was to see next. I knew it even while the man at the door was turning, and I dug the nails of my right hand into the palm of my left, to repress the fear that swelled up as a wave as I looked straight into his face and saw—my *own self*.

But I had expected it, as I say: and when the wave of fear had passed over me and gone, I could observe these two figures steadfastly enough. The girl dropped into a chair beside the table, and stretching her arms along the white cloth, bowed her head over them and wept. I saw her shoulders heave and her twined fingers move as she struggled with her grief. The young Squire advanced, and, with a hand on her shoulder, endeavored by many endearments to comfort her. His lips moved vehemently, and gradually her shoulders ceased to rise and fall. By-and-by she raised her head and looked up into his face with wet, gleaming eyes. It was very pitiful to see. The young man took her face between his hands, kissed it, and pouring out a glass of wine, held it to her lips. She put it aside with her hand and glanced up toward the tall clock in the corner. My eyes, following hers, saw that the hands pointed to a quarter to twelve.

The young Squire set down the glass hastily, stepped to the window, and, drawing aside the blue curtain, gazed out upon the night. Twice he looked back at Cicely, over his shoulder, and after a minute returned to the table. He drained the glass which the girl had declined, poured out another, still keeping his eyes on her, and began to walk impatiently up and down the room. And all the time Cicely's soft eyes never ceased to follow him. Clearly there was need for hurry, for they had not laid aside their traveling-cloaks, and once or twice the young man paused in his walk to listen. At length he pulled out his watch, glanced from it to the clock in the corner, put it away with a frown, and, striding up to the hearth, flung himself down in the armchair—the very armchair in which I was seated.

As he sat there, tapping the hearthrug with the toe of his thick riding-boot and moving his lips now and then in answer to some question from his sweetheart, I had time to examine his every feature. Line by line they reproduced my own—nay, looking straight into his eyes I could see through them into the soul of him and recognized that soul for my own. Of all the passions there I knew that myself contained the germs. Vices repressed in youth, tendencies to sin starved in my own nature by lack of opportunity—these flourished in a rank growth. I saw virtues, too, that I had once possessed but had lost by degrees in my respectable journey through life—courage, generosity, tenderness of heart. I was discovering these with envy, one by one, when he raised his head higher and listened for a moment, with a hand on either arm of the chair.

The next instant he sprang up and faced the door. Glancing at Cicely, I saw her cowering down in her chair.

The young Squire had hardly gained his feet when the door flew open and the figures of two men appeared on the threshold—Sir Felix Williams and his only son, the father and brother of Cicely.

There, in the doorway, the figures halted; but for an instant only. Almost before the Squire could draw, his sweetheart's brother had sprung forward. Like two serpents their rapiers engaged in the candle-light. The soundless blades crossed and glittered. Then one of them flickered in a narrow circle, and the brother's rapier went spinning from his hand across the room.

Young Cardinnock lowered his point at once, and his adversary stepped back a couple of paces. While a man might count twenty the pair looked each other in the face and then the old man, Sir Felix, stepped slowly forward.

But before he could thrust—for the young Squire still kept his point lowered—Cicely sprang forward and threw herself across her lover's breast. There, for all his gentle efforts his left hand made to disengage her, she clung. She had made her choice. There was no sign of faltering in her soft eyes, and her father had perforce to hold his hand.

The old man began to speak. I saw his face distorted with passion and his lips working. I saw the deep red gather on Cicely's cheeks and the anger in her lover's eyes. There was a pause, as Sir Felix ceased to speak, and then the young Squire replied. But his sentence stopped midway: for once more the old man rushed upon him.

This time young Cardinnock's rapier was raised. Girdling Cicely with his left arm, he parried her father's lunge and smote his blade aside. But such was the old man's passion that he followed the lunge with all his body, and, before his opponent could prevent it, was wounded high in the chest, beneath the collar-bone.

He reeled back and fell against the table.

Cicely ran forward and caught his hand; but he pushed her away savagely and, with another clutch at the table's edge, dropped upon the hearthrug. The young man, meanwhile, white and aghast, rushed to the table, filled a glass with wine, and held it to the lips of the wounded man. So the two lovers knelt.

It was at this point that I who sat and witnessed the tragedy was assailed by a horror entirely new. Hitherto I had, indeed, seen myself in Squire Philip Cardinnock; but now I began also to possess his soul and feel with his feelings, while at the same time I continued to sit before the glass, a helpless onlooker. I was two men at once; the man who knelt remorsefully and the man who waited in the armchair, incapable of word or movement, yet gifted with a torturing prescience. And as I sat this was what I saw:

The brother, as I knelt there oblivious of all but the wounded man, stepped across the room to the corner where his rapier lay, picked it up softly, and as softly stole up behind me. I tried to shout, to warn myself; but my tongue was tied. The brother's arm was lifted. The candlelight ran along the blade. Still the kneeling figure never turned.

And as my heart stiffened and awaited it, there came a flash of pain—one red-hot stroke of anguish.

III.

WHAT I SAW IN THE TARN.

As the steel entered my back, cutting all the cords that bound me to life, I suffered anguish too exquisite for words to reach, too deep for memory to dive after. My eyes closed and teeth shut on the taste of death; and as they shut a merciful oblivion wrapped me round.

When I awoke, the room was dark, and I was standing on my feet. A cold wind was blowing on my face, as from an open door. I staggered to meet this wind, and found myself groping along a passage and down a staircase filled with Egyptian darkness. Then the wind increased suddenly and shook the black curtain around my senses. A murky light broke in on me. I had a body. That I felt; but where it was I knew not. And so I felt my way forward in the direction where the twilight showed least dimly.

Slowly the curtain shook and its folds dissolved as I moved against the wind. The clouds lifted; and by degrees I grew aware that I was standing on the barren moor. Night was stretched around to the horizon, where straight ahead a gray bar shone across the gloom. I pressed on toward it. The heath was uneven under my feet, and now and then I stumbled heavily; but still I held on. For it seemed that I must get to this gray bar or die a second time. All my muscles, all my will, were strained upon this purpose.

Drawing nearer, I observed that a wave-like motion kept passing over this brighter space, as it had passed over the mirror. The glimmer would be obscured for a moment, and then reappear. At length a gentle acclivity of the moor hid it for a while. My legs positively raced up this slope, and upon the summit I hardly dared to look for a moment, knowing that if the light were an illusion all my hope must die with it.

But it was no illusion. There was the light, and there, before my feet, lay a sable sheet of water, over the surface of which the light was playing. There was no moon, no star in heaven; yet over this desolate tarn hovered a pale radiance that ceased again where the edge of its waves lapped the further bank of peat. Their monotonous wash hardly broke the stillness of the place.

The formless longing was now pulling at me with an attraction I could not deny, though within me there rose and fought against it a horror only less strong. Here, as in the Blue Room, two souls were struggling for me. It was the soul of Philip Cardinnock that drew me toward the tarn and the soul of Samuel Wraxall that resisted. Only, what was the thing toward which I was being pulled?

I must have stood at least a minute on the brink before I descried a black object floating at the far end of the tarn. What this object was I could not make out; but I knew it on the instant to be that for which I longed, and all my will grew suddenly intent on drawing it nearer. Even as my volition centered upon it, the black spot began to move slowly out into the pale radiance toward me. Silently, surely, as though my wish drew it by a rope, it floated nearer and nearer over the bosom of the tarn and while it was still some twenty yards from me I saw it to be a long black box, shaped somewhat like a coffin.

There was no doubt about it. I could hear the water now sucking at its dark sides. I stepped down the bank, and waded up to my knees in the icy water to meet it. It was a plain box, with no writing upon the lid, nor any speck of metal to relieve the dead black; and it moved with the same even speed straight up to where I stood.

As it came, I laid my hand upon it and touched wood. But with the touch came a further sensation that made me fling both arms around the box and begin frantically to haul it toward the shore.

It was a feeling of suffocation; of a weight that pressed in upon my ribs and choked the lungs' action. I felt that I must open that box or die horribly; that until I had it upon the bank and had forced the lid up. I should know no pause from the labor and torture of dying.

This put a wild strength into me. As the box grated upon the few pebbles by the shore, I bent over it, caught it once more by the sides, and with infinite effort dragged it up out of the water. It was heavy, and the weight upon my chest was heavier yet; but straining, panting, gasping, I hauled it up the bank, dropped it on the turf, and knelt over it, tugging furiously at the lid.

I was frenzied—no less. My nails were torn until the blood gushed. Lights danced before me; bells rang in my ears; the pressure on my lungs grew more intolerable with each moment; but still I fought with that lid. Seven devils were within me and helped me; and all the while I knew that I was dying, that unless the box were opened in a moment or two it would be too late.

The sweat ran off my eyebrows and dripped on the box. My breath came and went in sobs. I could not die. I could not, must not die. And so I tugged and strained and tugged again.

Then, as I felt the black anguish of the Blue Room descending a second time upon me, I seemed to put all my strength into my hands. From the lid or from my own throat—I could not distinguish—there came a creak and a long groan. I tore back the board and fell on the heath with one shuddering breath of relief.

And drawing it, I raised my head and looked over the coffin's edge. Still drawing it, I tumbled back.

White, cold, with the last struggle fixed on its features and open eyes, it was my own dead face that stared up at me!

CHAPTER IV.

HOW MUCH HAS SINCE BEEN EXPLAINED.

They found me, next morning, lying on the brink of the tarn, and carried me back to the inn. There I lay for weeks in a brain fever and talked—as they assure me—the wildest nonsense. The landlord had first guessed that something was amiss on finding the front door open when he came down at five o'clock. I must have turned to the left on leaving the house, traveled up the road for a hundred yards, and then struck almost at right angles across the moor. One of my shoes was found a furlong from the highway, and this had guided them. Of course they found no coffin beside me, and I was prudent enough to hold my tongue when I became convalescent. But the effect of that night was to shatter my health for a year and more, and force me to throw up my post of School Inspector. To this day I have never examined the school at Pitt's Scawens. But somebody else has; and last winter I received a letter, which I will give in full:

21 CHESTERHAM ROAD, KENSINGTON, W.,
December 3, 1891.

Dear Wraxall:

It is a long time since we have corresponded, but I have just returned from Cornwall, and while visiting Pitt's Scawens professionally, was reminded of you. I put up at the inn where you had your long illness. The people there were delighted to find that I knew you, and desired me to send "their duty" when next I wrote. By the way, I suppose you were introduced to their state

apartment—the Blue Room—and its wonderful chimney carving. I made a bid to the landlord for it, panels, mirror, and all, but he referred me to Squire Parkyn, the landlord. I think I may get it, as the Squire loves hard coin. When I have it up over my mantelpiece here you must run over and give me your opinion on it. By the way, clay has been discovered on the Tremenhuel Estate, just at the back of the “Indian Queens”; at least, I hear that Squire Parkyn is running a Company, and is sanguine. You remember the tarn behind the inn? They made an odd discovery there when draining it for the new works. In the mud at the bottom was imbedded the perfect skeleton of a man. The bones were quite clean and white. Close beside the body they afterward turned up a silver snuffbox, with the word “Fui” on the lid. “Fui” was the motto of the Cardinnocks, who held Tremenhuel before it passed to the Parkyns. There seems to be no doubt that these are the bones of the last Squire, who disappeared mysteriously more than a hundred years ago, in consequence of a love affair, I’m told. It looks like foul play; but, if so, the account has long since passed out of the hands of man.

Yours ever,

DAVID E. MAINWARING.

P. S.—I reopen this to say that Squire Parkyn has accepted my offer for the chimneypiece. Let me hear soon that you’ll come and look at it and give me your opinion.