

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW

BY H. DE VERE STACPOOLE



HE Candons had gone to France for their holiday and were staying at St. Dizier. It was the first real holiday since the honeymoon, and they were enjoying it.

Candon had recently been elected to the chair of Physiology at the McGill university in Shrewsbury.

It was a sure thousand a year and a certain lead to higher things, and this continental holiday was, so to speak, the sigh of relief after six years of struggle, hardship, and even sometimes — privation. He was a fine-looking, jovial, upstanding man of the new type of scientist.

Julia Candon was a little woman, gracile and quiet as a mouse. Not unlike a mouse—if you can fancy a mouse with large gray eyes.

She had been the making of Candon, and she had that wonderful and intimate knowledge of his character which love alone can give and women alone possess.

They had no children.

Children are extra padlocks on one's treasure chest, and Julia, who had always been praying to Heaven for one little baby for the sake of the baby, would have welcomed a dozen, not only for their own sakes but for that of her treasure.

"Jack," said she one day, a week before their return to England, "I wonder ought we to go?"

Jack, through the mediumship of the English Tennis Club, had made the acquaintanceship of the Duc de St. Die, whose estates lie to the westward of St. Dizier. St. Die had taken

a fancy to Jack and Julia, introduced them to his wife, and invited them to his place for a couple of days.

"Why not?" asked Jack, who was packing a suit case in his shirt sleeves, and with a cigar in his mouth. "They're really jolly people, and you won't have the chance of seeing a real old French château again in a hurry."

"I don't know," said Julia. "They are such grand people and we are so small — and I have no evening frocks."

"No evening frocks!—why you have two."

"Only old things," said Julia. "Still, I don't want to spoil your pleasure."

St. Die's motor car was to call for them at four, and at four precisely the gorgeous limousine arrived at the hotel.

The way lay through a forest where the road was carpeted with pine needles, and here above the faint hum of the almost silently running car they could hear the bark of the fox and the call of the jay from the green gloom that seemed to hold all the creatures of Grimm and Andersen.

The forest fascinated Julia, but the park of the Château made her forget the forest, it seemed leagues in extent: Leagues of sunlit grass-land browsed down to velvet by the cattle, broken in the far distance by bosky groves, and studded with solitary oaks—vast trees each standing in the pond of its own shadow.

Then the Château made her forget the park, and the Duc made her forget everything else, for he was standing on the steps to receive them.