

The Lost Road

"That's an awful thought," said the cavalry officer.

"You don't like him," reproved Miss Gardner. "He is always very polite to you."

"He's polite to everybody," said Lee; "that's why I don't like him. He's not a real artist. He's a courtier. God gave him a talent, and he makes a mean use of it. Uses it to flatter people. He's like these long-haired violinists who play anything you ask them to in the lobster palaces."

Miss Gardner looked away from him. Her color was high and her eyes very bright.

"I think," she said steadily, "that Mr. Stedman is a *great* artist, and some day all the world will think so, too!"

Lee made no answer. Not because he disagreed with her estimate of Mr. Stedman's genius—he made no pretence of being an art critic—but because her vehement admiration had filled him with sudden panic. He was not jealous. For that he was far too humble. Indeed, he thought himself so utterly unworthy of Frances Gardner that the fact that to him she might prefer some one else was in no way a surprise. He only knew that if she should prefer some one else not all his troop horses nor all his men could put Humpty Dumpty back again.