

THE HUNDREDTH CHANCE

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That hill taxed her physical powers to the uttermost. Secretly she dreaded the ascent, but not for worlds would she have had Bunny know it—Bunny, who depended solely upon her for the very few pleasures that ever came his way. To the last ounce of her strength she was dedicated to the service of her idol.

CHAPTER III

THE NEW ACQUAINTANCE

THEY reached the sunny stretch of parade in time to see the young chestnut that had excited Bunny's interest being coaxed along the edge of the water by his rider. The animal was covered with froth, and evidently in a ferment of nervous excitement. The man who rode him sat loosely in the saddle, as if the tussle in progress were of very minor importance in his estimation. He kept the fretting creature's head turned towards the water, however, and at intervals he patted the streaming neck and spoke a few words of encouragement.

At Bunny's request his chair was drawn to the edge of the parade, and from here he and Maud watched the progress of the battle. A battle of wills it undoubtedly was, though there was nothing in the man's attitude to indicate any strain. He was obviously one who knew how to bide his time—thick-set, bull-necked, somewhat bullet-headed, with a face of even redness and a short, blunt nose that looked aggressively confident.

"Wonder if he'll do it," said Bunny.

Maud wondered too, realizing that the task would be no easy one. The horse was plainly on edge with apprehension, and her sympathies went out to him. Somehow she did not want to see him conquered. In fact, not greatly admiring the physiognomy of his rider, she hoped the horse would win.

Stepping with extreme daintiness, as if he expected the ground to open and swallow him, the animal sidled past, and she caught the gleam of a wicked eye as he went. There was mischief mingled with his fear. He evidently was not feeling particularly kindly disposed towards the man who rode him. The loose seat of the latter made her wonder if he were wholly aware of this.