

THE HUNDREDTH CHANCE

PART I

THE START

CHAPTER I

BEGGARS

"MY dear Maud, I hope I am not lacking in proper pride. But it is an accepted—though painful—fact that beggars cannot be choosers."

Lady Brian spoke with plaintive emphasis the while she drew an elaborate initial in the sand at her feet with the point of her parasol.

"I cannot live in want," she said, after a thoughtful moment or two. "Besides, there is poor little Bunny to be considered." Another thoughtful pause; then: "What did you say, dear?"

Lady Brian's daughter made an abrupt movement without taking her eyes off the clear-cut horizon; beautiful eyes of darkest, deepest blue under straight black brows that gave them a somewhat forbidding look. There was nothing remarkable about the rest of her face. It was thin and sallow, and at the moment rather drawn; not a contented face, and yet possessing a quality indefinable that made it sad rather than bitter. Her smile was not very frequent, but when it came it transfigured her utterly. No one ever pictured that smile of hers beforehand. It came so brilliantly, so suddenly, like a burst of sunshine over a brown and desolate landscape, making so vast a difference that all who saw it for the first time marvelled at the unexpected glow.

But it was very far from her face just now. In fact, she