

THE CLUTCH OF CIRCUMSTANCE

PART ONE

CHAPTER I

"Is Lady Trask at home, Brooks?" Sir Ashton Trask inquired of the butler as he entered his own drawing room.

"Yes, Sir Ashton, Lady Trask is in, I believe, sir."

"Send her word that I am here, please."

The servant withdrew, and Sir Ashton took a few turns up and down the room, nervously engrossed in his own thoughts.

At the sound of Lady Trask's entrance, he turned and watched her come toward him, across the long room. She was tall and gracious and beautiful. She moved with a large slow dignity, which always delighted him. She wore a deep toned velvet gown befitting a prin-