

CHAPTER I

THE DUCHESS OF PENDLETON

I WAS born in the lodge that stands just behind the great iron gates that guard the entrance to Pendleton Castle. How often I can remember my mother springing up from her seat and hastening out to fling them open! I, too, would run to the door and shyly watch the grand folk as they rode or drove up the avenue, often receiving a kindly nod as they passed.

They were hardly mortal in my eyes, these grand Castle folk. I can remember even now my surprise when the old Duke died. Once, so my mother told me, when I was still a baby in her arms, he had asked to see me, and my mother had unwrapped the shawls about me and presented my ruddy round face to his Grace's scrutiny.

"A very pretty child," he had said graciously. "I shall watch his career with interest."