

Col. Clayton's Lake Tour.

CHAPTER I.

"Of cou'se I must yield," sighed the Colonel. "Self-abnegation is the distinguishin' featu'e of my life. I remained a bachelah to escape the ty'any of you' sex and yet I've been the slave of woman's whims all my life. I reckon it'll be my fate to the end."

"There's not the slightest chance for your emancipation, Colonel. Your martyrdom is imposed by innate gallantry and tenderness of heart. You have an atrociously quick temper, but it expends itself in a single explosion, just like a fire cracker. You can bristle all over with anger, but you know, Colonel, the bees gather no sweeter honey than they find in the thistle blossom."

"Who's a thistle, you minx? I'll disinhehit you, Flops. I'll do it suah. I can't help you' makin' a convenience of me while I live, but theh's no end to the révenge a rich man can wo'k out in his will. It would be a wicked waste of money, anyhow, to leave it to a madcap like you."

"That's right, you dear and cherubic bluffer. Blow away like a tornado till the calm comes. Just as though I'd care for money or any other sordid thing of earth after you were gone. What would there be to live for if there was no Colonel to be teased, and to storm and to be trained in the way he vows he will never go? But please remember, sir, that I'm an autocrat of your own making."

"Theh's the woman of it fo' you, throwin' the whole blame back on me. Just as though my ca'ful trainin' could make you peht, self-