

THE LAKE OF PHANTOMS.

CHAPTER I.

When old William Clinton died, the neighbors grew anxious to know which of his two sons would step into his father's large estate and become the patron and benefactor of his large circle of friends and neighbors. The old gentleman was widely known and highly esteemed by people far and near. His sudden demise had cast a deep gloom over all, and a doubt rested on the minds of many whether either of his sons would be successful in holding the reins of the estate.

The older son, James, gave promise of becoming more like his father, yet he was in many characteristics decidedly different. He inherited from his mother a kind, mild disposition and a forgiving spirit, which was in striking contrast with the father. He also possessed an air of indifference toward things which irritated and vexed others. No matter what happened, even if it were what others would call a calamity, James would always say, "Oh, well, everything will be right in the end, so don't worry."

This optimistic way of looking at life endeared him to those with whom he came in daily contact, and they naturally hailed him as his father's successor.

Yet with all this mild, unassuming manner, he was not his father's favorite. He was not the son to whom the father looked with pride to uphold the dignity of the Clintons and make the illustrious old family prominent in the future.

Everyone in the county of Lincolnshire knew of the popularity of the Clintons, and the important government positions which they had held. The walls of Clinton Hall beamed with the portraits of the Clinton ancestors who had won laurels either upon the field or upon the stage, and the work of whose pen was as lasting as the strokes of their sword were destructive.

By some of the portraits one might see some of the symbols which represented the greatness of that personage in life. Be-