

**WARNER'S CHASE:  
OR, THE  
GENTLE HEART**

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Warner's chase: or, The gentle heart by Annie S. Swan

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**ANNIE S. SWAN**

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OR, THE GENTLE HEART.

BY

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Author of "Aldersyde," "Into the Haven," "A Year at Coverley," &c. &c.

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## WARNER'S CHASE.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### A DARK DAY.

IT had rained all day.

It was still raining, and though the mournful dripping had ceased, the sky was gray and sad, except in the west where a faint golden glimmer lit the gloom.

The month was October, and on bright days the woods of Warner's Chase were a sight to see. The great beeches in the park surrounding the house were tinged with rich crimson and gaudy yellow, and when the sun shone upon them there seemed to be a little point of flame rising from every leaf.

But to-night there was no brightness nor beauty at all, only a strange dead calm, like that which sometimes succeeds a great sorrow, such as we sometimes liken to a storm. The fall of the year had brought sorrow indeed to the Warrens

of Warner's Chase, and it had culminated on this dreary day in the burial of its beloved master, who had been in failing health all the summer through, and whose precious life had ebbed with the fall of the leaf. Many other troubles too hung dark over Warner's Chase. It was said that the poor squire's widow would be left nearly penniless with her six children, and that it would be impossible for her to remain in the Chase. It was a wretched, impoverished estate, which had required all a man's active prudent supervision to provide even a meagre livelihood for the family. The kindly gossip-loving folks of Warrendene shook their heads mournfully over the many changes which were passing over the old family, and wondered what like it would be to see strangers in the Chase. There had been Warrens of Warner's Chase it seemed ever since the old place had been built one stone upon another.

It was a lovely picturesque spot, even seen in the sombre light of that sad October night. The house was very old; but it was clothed with that strange quaint beauty which we do not see in the buildings of to-day. It seemed as if every quaint tower and turret, every odd gable and mullioned window teemed with memories of the past, and could tell their tale of love, sorrow, and change which had been the