

# **A YEAR AT COVERLEY**

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A year at Coverley by Annie S. Swan

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**ANNIE S. SWAN**

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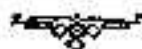
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A YEAR AT COVERLEY.





"WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN DOING, LOUIS?" Page 34.

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BY

ANNIE S. SWAN,

Author of "Alderayde."



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## A YEAR AT COVERLEY.

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### CHAPTER I.

#### NEWS.

**T**HE young Raynes thought there could not be, all the world over, so dear and beautiful a spot as Coverley. Other people did not think it such a desirable place, though it had a lovely situation and was so picturesque to look at, but the five Raynes thought it quite perfect in every respect; and most assuredly there never was a home so well fitted for all the needs and pleasures of childhood. It had a great wild garden which nobody ever cultivated, and in which each child had a plot; and which opened out into a large paddock where Bobby,

the old pony, browsed peacefully when he was not in requisition for driving or riding.

The father of the Raynes was a physician with a large practice, but he was not a rich man. Their mother was—well, just *mother*; I need not say any more.

Hubert, the eldest of the five, was at Eton; then came Mabel, a gentle-eyed sweet-tempered girl of twelve; then Charlie, a good-natured rather stupid boy, whom everybody liked; then Sunbeam, or Katherina Mary, as she would say with great dignity sometimes, a wild laughing sunny-hearted sprite brimming over with happiness and love to every human being. Then there was a fat baby just able to toddle alone. So now you have been introduced to all the Raynes, and I will go on with my story.

On a raw damp January morning Dr. and Mrs. Rayne were alone together in the dining-room. Breakfast was over, and the children were in the school-room with their governess. Mrs. Rayne was sitting at the table looking at an open letter with an anxious and perplexed expression on her sweet motherly face. The doctor was standing on the hearth looking expectantly at his wife, as if waiting, and waiting

with very remarkable patience, for her to say something.

"Well, Mamma?" he said presently, in a slightly questioning tone.

"I suppose they must come," said Mrs. Rayne, with a half sigh. "In fact we are given no alternative. William simply says the doctors order a voyage to Australia for Marion, and that the children will be sent here on Monday."

Dr. Rayne laughed.

"That is William's way, dear. Read a little further, his offer is very liberal."

"So I see; but it will upset this house, I fear," said Mrs. Rayne. "I remember Louis and Fanny as very spoiled children five years ago. What if they don't agree with our little ones, Papa? and they will be here a year at any-rate."

"Don't worry, dear, let the poor little mortals come. *You* will do them good if anybody can, and children's quarrels are only summer squalls. Well, I must run; good-morning," said Dr. Rayne in his light-hearted way, and, stooping to kiss his wife, went off on his rounds.

Mrs. Rayne sat quite ten minutes after her husband left her, thinking over the letter, and the advent of two strangers into her home.