

A GENTLE BENEFACTRESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PINES.

ON a gently sloping hill facing the west, stood a roomy, old-fashioned house that had fronted the storms and sunshine for five and forty years. It was inclosed on every side, save a narrow space in front, by great pines that were themselves a part of the forest primeval. Inside their shelter, and directly around the house, was a strip of grass ground, while beyond them on the outside lay smooth, sloping meadows and grain fields, with pasture lands where cows and sheep were feeding ankle deep in grass and clover, for the "Pines" was a farm under an unusually fine state of cultivation, having been