

**GWENDOLINE; OR,
HALCOTS
AND HALCOMBES**

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Gwendoline; or, Halcots and Halcombes by Agnes Giberne

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AGNES GIBERNE

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Gwendoline;

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BY AGNES GIBERNE,

AUTHOR OF "THROUGH THE LIND," ETC.

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TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.—LONDON FOG.....	7
“ II.—LADY HALCOT.....	19
“ III.—GLADIOLUS COTTAGE.....	27
“ IV.—THE ROCKS.....	45
“ V.—AFTERWARDS.....	56
“ VI.—GWEN'S HOME.....	65
“ VII.—MISS WITHIERS.....	76
“ VIII.—A CALLER.....	83
“ IX.—AN UNEXPECTED PROPOSAL.....	100
“ X.—WHAT HAD TO BE.....	110
“ XI.—AMID NEW SCENES.....	117
“ XII.—GWEN'S POSSESSIONS.....	129
“ XIII.—TO AND ABOUT HONORA.....	136
“ XIV.—AN ENCOUNTER.....	155
“ XV.—CLOUDS.....	173
“ XVI.—LADY HALCOT'S WILL.....	183
“ XVII.—RICH TOWARDS GOD.....	191
“ XVIII.—LONELINESS.....	208
“ XIX.—TO A POINT.....	208
“ XX.—THE END.....	218

G WENDOLINE;
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CHAPTER I.

LONDON FOG.

“YOU won't go into the city to-day, of course, Stuart?”

The voice betrayed anxiety. It was breakfast time, but gaslights shone overhead, glittering on chased silver and on broad blue borders of delicate china. Beyond the panes of the two windows only a dense yellow haze was visible.

Mr. Selwyn looked up from a deluge of morning correspondence, following his wife's glance. “It will lessen,” he said tranquilly.

“Just this once,” she pleaded. “Such a day! Could you not be content to spend one day at home?”

“How about appointments, my love?”

"I dare say you have none of any importance."

"Gwendoline Halcombe, at twelve."

"The pretty girl that we met in the Academy with her father? But that need not take you out. You don't seriously suppose any lady would keep an appointment in this fog."

The lawyer's gray eyes laughed pleasantly beneath their broad brows. He was not lawyer-like, in aspect, according to conventional notions, being strong and upright in build, with ruddy coloring and a particularly straightforward expression.

"I don't for a moment suppose so of any lady," he said. "I suppose it to be not improbable in the case of Miss Halcombe."

"I do not like young women to be too independent,—very young and pretty ones especially."

"Perhaps Miss Halcombe does not like it either. Independence becomes a matter of necessity in certain instances,—with the eldest of ten, for example."

"Is she that?"

"Ten is the number, I believe, ranging from nineteen to three."

"What made her fix on to-day?"

"She wrote and asked if she might have a few words with me. I named the day and the hour."