

**CHAPTER VII**

Agatha was at this time in her seventeenth year. She had a lively perception of the foibles of others, and no reverence for her seniors, whom she thought dull, cautious, and ridiculously amenable by commonplaces. But she was subject to the illusion which disables youth in spite of its superiority to age. She thought herself an exception. Crediting Mr. Jansenius and the general mob of mankind with nothing but a grovelling consciousness of some few material facts, she felt in herself an exquisite sense and all-embracing conception of nature, shared only by her favorite poets and heroes of romance and history. Hence she was in the common youthful case of being a much better judge of other people's affairs than of her own. At the fellow-student who adored some Henry or Augustus, not from the drivelling sentimentality which the world calls love, but because this particular Henry or Augustus was a phoenix to whom the laws that govern the relations of ordinary lads and lasses did not apply, Agatha laughed in her sleeve. The more she saw of this weakness in her fellows, the more satisfied she was that, being forewarned, she was also forearmed against an attack of it on herself, much as if a doctor were to conclude that he could not catch smallpox because he had seen many cases of it; or as if a master mariner, knowing that many ships are wrecked in the British channel, should venture there without a pilot, thinking that he knew its perils too well to run any risk of them. Yet, as the doctor might hold such an opinion if he believed himself to be constituted differently from ordinary men; or the shipmaster adopt such a course under the impression that his vessel was a star, Agatha found false security in the subjective difference between her fellows seen from without and herself known from within. When, for instance, she fell in love with Mr. Jefferson Smilash (a step upon which she resolved the day after the storm), her imagination invested the pleasing emotion with a sacredness which, to her, set it far apart and distinct from the frivolous fancies of which Henry and Augustus had been the subject, and she the confidant.

"I can look at him quite coolly and dispassionately," she said to herself. "Though his face has a strange influence that must, I know, correspond to some unexplained power within me, yet it is not a perfect face. I have seen many men who are, strictly speaking, far handsomer. If the light that never was on sea or land is in his eyes, yet they are not pretty eyes--not half so clear as mine. Though he wears his common clothes with a nameless grace that betrays his true breeding at every step, yet he is not tall, dark, and melancholy, as my ideal hero would be if I were as great a fool as girls of my age usually are. If I am in love, I have sense enough not to let my love blind my judgment."

She did not tell anyone of her new interest in life. Strongest in that student community, she had used her power with good-nature enough to win the popularity of a school leader, and occasionally with unscrupulousness enough to secure the privileges of a school bully. Popularity and privilege, however, only satisfied her when she was in the mood for them. Girls, like men, want to be petted, pitied, and made much of, when they are diffident, in low spirits, or in unrequited love. These are services which the weak cannot render to the strong and which the strong will not render to the weak, except when there is also a difference of sex. Agatha knew by experience that though a weak woman cannot understand why her stronger sister should wish to lean upon her, she may triumph in the fact without understanding it, and give chaff instead of consolation. Agatha wanted to be understood and not to be chaffed. Finding herself unable to satisfy both these conditions, she resolved to do without sympathy and to hold her tongue. She had often had to do so before, and she was helped on this occasion by a sense of the ridiculous appearance her passion might wear in the vulgar eye. Her secret kept itself, as she was supposed in the college to be insensible to the softer emotions. Love wrought no external change upon her. It made her believe that she had left her girlhood behind her and was now a woman with a newly-developed heart capacity at which she would childishly have scoffed a little while before. She felt ashamed of the bee on the window pane, although it somehow buzzed as frequently as before in spite of her. Her calendar, formerly a monotonous cycle of class times, meal times, play times, and bed time, was now irregularly divided by walks past the chalet and accidental glimpses of its tenant.

Early in December came a black frost, and navigation on the canal was suspended. Wickens's boy was sent to the college with news that Wickens's pond would bear, and that the young ladies should be welcome at any time. The pond was only four feet deep, and as Miss Wilson set much store by the physical education of her

pupils, leave was given for skating. Agatha, who was expert on the ice, immediately proposed that a select party should go out before breakfast next morning. Actions not in themselves virtuous often appear so when performed at hours that compel early rising, and some of the candidates for the Cambridge Local, who would not have sacrificed the afternoon to amusement, at once fell in with her suggestion. But for them it might never have been carried out; for when they summoned Agatha, at half-past six next morning, to leave her warm bed and brave the biting air, she would have refused without hesitation had she not been shamed into compliance by these laborious ones who stood by her bedside, blue-nosed and hungry, but ready for the ice. When she had dressed herself with much shuddering and chattering, they allayed their internal discomfort by a slender meal of biscuits, got their skates, and went out across the rimy meadows, past patient cows breathing clouds of steam, to Wickens's pond. Here, to their surprise, was Smilash, on electro-plated acme skates, practicing complicated figures with intense diligence. It soon appeared that his skill came short of his ambition; for, after several narrow escapes and some frantic staggering, his calves, elbows, and occiput smote the ice almost simultaneously. On rising ruefully to a sitting posture he became aware that eight young ladies were watching his proceedings with interest.

"This comes of a common man putting himself above his station by getting into gentlemen's skates," he said. "Had I been content with a humble slide, as my fathers was, I should ha' been a happier man at the present moment." He sighed, rose, touched his hat to Miss Ward, and took off his skates, adding: "Good-morning, Miss. Miss Wilson sent me word to be here sharp at six to put on the young ladies' skates, and I took the liberty of trying a figure or two to keep out the cold."

"Miss Wilson did not tell me that she ordered you to come," said Miss Ward.

"Just like her to be thoughtful and yet not let on to be! She is a kind lady, and a learned--like yourself, Miss. Sit yourself down on the camp-stool. and give me your heel, if I may be so bold as to stick a gimlet into it."

His assistance was welcome, and Miss Ward allowed him to put on her skates. She was a Canadian, and could skate well. Jane, the first to follow her, was anxious as to the strength of the ice; but when reassured, she acquitted herself admirably, for she was proficient in outdoor exercises, and had the satisfaction of laughing in the field at those who laughed at her in the study. Agatha, contrary to her custom, gave way to her companions, and her boots were the last upon which Smilash operated.

"How d'you do, Miss Wylie?" he said, dropping the Smilash manner now that the rest were out of earshot.

"I am very well, thank you," said Agatha, shy and constrained. This phase of her being new to him, he paused with her heel in his hand and looked up at her curiously. She collected herself, returned his gaze steadily, and said: "How did Miss Wilson send you word to come? She only knew of our party at half-past nine last night."

"Miss Wilson did not send for me."

"But you have just told Miss Ward that she did."

"Yes. I find it necessary to tell almost as many lies now that I am a simple laborer as I did when I was a gentleman. More, in fact."

"I shall know how much to believe of what you say in the future."

"The truth is this. I am perhaps the worst skater in the world, and therefore, according to a natural law, I covet the faintest distinction on the ice more than immortal fame for the things in which nature has given me aptitude to excel. I envy that large friend of yours--Jane is her name, I think--more than I envy Plato. I came down here this morning, thinking that the skating world was all a-bed, to practice in secret."

"I am glad we caught you at it," said Agatha maliciously, for he was disappointing her. She wanted him to be heroic in his conversation; and he would not.

"I suppose so," he replied. "I have observed that Woman's dearest delight is to wound Man's self-conceit, though Man's dearest delight is to gratify hers. There is at least one creature lower than Man. Now, off with you. Shall I hold you until your ankles get firm?"

"Thank you," she said, disgusted: "*I can skate pretty well, and I don't think you could give me any useful assistance.*" And she went off cautiously, feeling that a mishap would be very disgraceful after such a speech.

He stood on the shore, listening to the grinding, swaying sound of the skates, and watching the growing complexity of the curves they were engraving on the ice. As the girls grew warm and accustomed to the exercise they laughed, jested, screamed recklessly when they came into collision, and sailed before the wind down the whole length of the pond at perilous speed. The more animated they became, the gloomier looked Smilash. "Not two-penn'orth of choice between them and a parcel of puppies," he said; "except that some of them are conscious that there is a man looking at them, although he is only a blackguard laborer. They remind me of Henrietta in a hundred ways. Would I laugh, now, if the whole sheet of ice were to burst into little bits under them?"

Just then the ice cracked with a startling report, and the skaters, except Jane, skimmed away in all directions.

"You are breaking the ice to pieces, Jane," said Agatha, calling from a safe distance. "How can you expect it to bear your weight?"

"Pack of fools!" retorted Jane indignantly. "The noise only shows how strong it is."

The shock which the report had given Smilash answered him his question. "Make a note that wishes for the destruction of the human race, however rational and sincere, are contrary to nature," he said, recovering his spirits. "Besides, what a precious fool I should be if I were working at an international association of creatures only fit for destruction! Hi, lady! One word, Miss!" This was to Miss Ward, who had skated into his neighborhood. "It bein' a cold morning, and me havin' a poor and common circulation, would it be looked on as a liberty if I was to cut a slide here or take a turn in the corner all to myself?"

"You may skate over there if you wish," she said, after a pause for consideration, pointing to a deserted spot at the leeward end of the pond, where the ice was too rough for comfortable skating.

"Nobly spoke!" he cried, with a grin, hurrying to the place indicated, where, skating being out of the question, he made a pair of slides, and gravely exercised himself upon them until his face glowed and his fingers tingled in the frosty air. The time passed quickly; when Miss Ward sent for him to take off her skates there was a general groan and declaration that it could not possibly be half-past eight o'clock yet. Smilash knelt before the camp-stool, and was presently busy unbuckling and unscrewing. When Jane's turn came, the camp-stool creaked beneath her weight. Agatha again remonstrated with her, but immediately reproached herself with flippancy before Smilash, to whom she wished to convey an impression of deep seriousness of character.

"Smallest foot of the lot," he said critically, holding Jane's foot between his finger and thumb as if it were an art treasure which he had been invited to examine. "And belonging to the finest built lady."

Jane snatched away her foot, blushed, and said:

"Indeed! What next, I wonder?"

"T'other 'un next," he said, setting to work on the remaining skate. When it was off, he looked up at her, and

she darted a glance at him as she rose which showed that his compliment (her feet were, in fact, small and pretty) was appreciated.

"Allow me, Miss," he said to Gertrude, who was standing on one leg, leaning on Agatha, and taking off her own skates.

"No, thank you," she said coldly. "I don't need your assistance."

"I am well aware that the offer was overbold," he replied, with a self-complacency that made his profession of humility exasperating. "If all the skates is off, I will, by Miss Wilson's order, carry them and the camp-stool back to the college."

Miss Ward handed him her skates and turned away. Gertrude placed hers on the stool and went with Miss Ward. The rest followed, leaving him to stare at the heap of skates and consider how he should carry them. He could think of no better plan than to interlace the straps and hang them in a chain over his shoulder. By the time he had done this the young ladies were out of sight, and his intention of enjoying their society during the return to the college was defeated. They had entered the building long before he came in sight of it.

Somewhat out of conceit with his folly, he went to the servants' entrance and rang the bell there. When the door was opened, he saw Miss Ward standing behind the maid who admitted him.

"Oh," she said, looking at the string of skates as if she had hardly expected to see them again, "so you have brought our things back?"

"Such were my instructions," he said, taken aback by her manner. "You had no instructions. What do you mean by getting our skates into your charge under false pretences? I was about to send the police to take them from you. How dare you tell me that you were sent to wait on me, when you know very well that you were nothing of the sort?"

"I couldn't help it, Miss," he replied submissively. "I am a natural born liar--always was. I know that it must appear dreadful to you that never told a lie, and don't hardly know what a lie is, belonging as you do to a class where none is ever told. But common people like me tells lies just as a duck swims. I ask your pardon, Miss, most humble, and I hope the young ladies'll be able to tell one set of skates from t'other; for I'm blest if I can."

"Put them down. Miss Wilson wishes to speak to you before you go. Susan, show him the way."

"Hope you ain't been and got a poor cove into trouble, Miss?"

"Miss Wilson knows how you have behaved."

He smiled at her benevolently and followed Susan upstairs. On their way they met Jane, who stole a glance at him, and was about to pass by, when he said:

"Won't you say a word to Miss Wilson for a poor common fellow, honored young lady? I have got into dreadful trouble for having made bold to assist you this morning."

"You needn't give yourself the pains to talk like that," replied Jane in an impetuous whisper. "We all know that you're only pretending."

"Well, you can guess my motive," he whispered, looking tenderly at her.

"Such stuff and nonsense! I never heard of such a thing in my life," said Jane, and ran away, plainly

understanding that he had disguised himself in order to obtain admission to the college and enjoy the happiness of looking at her.

"Cursed fool that I am!" he said to himself; "I cannot act like a rational creature for five consecutive minutes."

The servant led him to the study and announced, "The man, if you please, ma'am."

"Jeff Smilash," he added in explanation.

"Come in," said Miss Wilson sternly.

He went in, and met the determined frown which she cast on him from her seat behind the writing table, by saying courteously:

"Good-morning, Miss Wilson."

She bent forward involuntarily, as if to receive a gentleman. Then she checked herself and looked implacable.

"I have to apologize," he said, "for making use of your name unwarrantably this morning--telling a lie, in fact. I happened to be skating when the young ladies came down, and as they needed some assistance which they would hardly have accepted from a common man--excuse my borrowing that tiresome expression from our acquaintance Smilash--I set their minds at ease by saying that you had sent for me. Otherwise, as you have given me a bad character--though not worse than I deserve--they would probably have refused to employ me, or at least I should have been compelled to accept payment, which I, of course, do not need."

Miss Wilson affected surprise. "I do not understand you," she said.

"Not altogether," he said smiling. "But you understand that I am what is called a gentleman."

"No. The gentlemen with whom I am conversant do not dress as you dress, nor speak as you speak, nor act as you act."

He looked at her, and her countenance confirmed the hostility of her tone. He instantly relapsed into an aggravated phase of Smilash.

"I will no longer attempt to set myself up as a gentleman," he said. "I am a common man, and your ladyship's hi recognizes me as such and is not to be deceived. But don't go for to say that I am not candid when I am as candid as ever you will let me be. What fault, if any, do you find with my putting the skates on the young ladies, and carryin' the campstool for them?"

"If you are a gentleman," said Miss Wilson, reddening, "your conduct in persisting in these antics in my presence is insulting to me. Extremely so."

"Miss Wilson," he replied, unruffled, "if you insist on Smilash, you shall have Smilash; I take an insane pleasure in personating him. If you want Sidney--my real Christian name--you can command him. But allow me to say that you must have either one or the other. If you become frank with me, I will understand that you are addressing Sidney. If distant and severe, Smilash."

"No matter what your name may be," said Miss Wilson, much annoyed, "I forbid you to come here or to hold any communication whatever with the young ladies in my charge."

"Why?"

"Because I choose."

"There is much force in that reason, Miss Wilson; but it is not moral force in the sense conveyed by your college prospectus, which I have read with great interest."

Miss Wilson, since her quarrel with Agatha, had been sore on the subject of moral force. "No one is admitted here," she said, "without a trustworthy introduction or recommendation. A disguise is not a satisfactory substitute for either."

"Disguises are generally assumed for the purpose of concealing crime," he remarked sententiously.

"Precisely so," she said emphatically.

"Therefore, I bear, to say the least, a doubtful character. Nevertheless, I have formed with some of the students here a slight acquaintance, of which, it seems, you disapprove. You have given me no good reason why I should discontinue that acquaintance, and you cannot control me except by your wish--a sort of influence not usually effective with doubtful characters. Suppose I disregard your wish, and that one or two of your pupils come to you and say: 'Miss Wilson, in our opinion Smilash is an excellent fellow; we find his conversation most improving. As it is your principle to allow us to exercise our own judgment, we intend to cultivate the acquaintance of Smilash.' How will you act in that case?"

"Send them home to their parents at once."

"I see that your principles are those of the Church of England. You allow the students the right of private judgment on condition that they arrive at the same conclusions as you. Excuse my saying that the principles of the Church of England, however excellent, are not those your prospectus led me to hope for. Your plan is coercion, stark and simple."

"I do not admit it," said Miss Wilson, ready to argue, even with Smilash, in defence of her system. "The girls are quite at liberty to act as they please, but I reserve my equal liberty to exclude them from my college if I do not approve of their behavior."

"Just so. In most schools children are perfectly at liberty to learn their lessons or not, just as they please; but the principal reserves an equal liberty to whip them if they cannot repeat their tasks."

"I do not whip my pupils," said Miss Wilson indignantly. "The comparison is an outrage."

"But you expel them; and, as they are devoted to you and to the place, expulsion is a dreaded punishment. Yours is the old system of making laws and enforcing them by penalties, and the superiority of Alton College to other colleges is due, not to any difference of system, but to the comparative reasonableness of its laws and the mildness and judgment with which they are enforced."

"My system is radically different from the old one. However, I will not discuss the matter with you. A mind occupied with the prejudices of the old coercive despotism can naturally only see in the new a modification of the old, instead of, as my system is, an entire reversal or abandonment of it."

He shook his head sadly and said: "You seek to impose your ideas on others, ostracizing those who reject them. Believe me, mankind has been doing nothing else ever since it began to pay some attention to ideas. It has been said that a benevolent despotism is the best possible form of government. I do not believe that saying, because I believe another one to the effect that hell is paved with benevolence, which most people, the proverb being too deep for them, misinterpret as unfulfilled intentions. As if a benevolent despot might not by any error of judgment destroy his kingdom, and then say, like Romeo when he got his friend killed, 'I thought

all for the best!' Excuse my rambling. I meant to say, in short, that though you are benevolent and judicious you are none the less a despot."

Miss Wilson, at a loss for a reply, regretted that she had not, before letting him gain so far on her, dismissed him summarily instead of tolerating a discussion which she did not know how to end with dignity. He relieved her by adding unexpectedly:

"Your system was the cause of my absurd marriage. My wife acquired a degree of culture and reasonableness from her training here which made her seem a superior being among the chatterers who form the female seasoning in ordinary society. I admired her dark eyes, and was only too glad to seize the excuse her education offered me for believing her a match for me in mind as well as in body."

Miss Wilson, astonished, determined to tell him coldly that her time was valuable. But curiosity took possession of her in the act of utterance, and the words that came were, "Who was she?"

"Henrietta Jansenius. She is Henrietta Trefusis, and I am Sidney Trefusis, at your mercy. I see I have aroused your compassion at last."

"Nonsense!" said Miss Wilson hastily; for her surprise was indeed tinged by a feeling that he was thrown away on Henrietta.

"I ran away from her and adopted this retreat and this disguise in order to avoid her. The usual rebuke to human forethought followed. I ran straight into her arms--or rather she ran into mine. You remember the scene, and were probably puzzled by it."

"You seem to think your marriage contract a very light matter, Mr. Trefusis. May I ask whose fault was the separation? Hers, of course."

"I have nothing to reproach her with. I expected to find her temper hasty, but it was not so--her behavior was unexceptionable. So was mine. Our bliss was perfect, but unfortunately, I was not made for domestic bliss--at all events I could not endure it--so I fled, and when she caught me again I could give no excuse for my flight, though I made it clear to her that I would not resume our connubial relations just yet. We parted on bad terms. I fully intended to write her a sweet letter to make her forgive me in spite of herself, but somehow the weeks have slipped away and I am still fully intending. She has never written, and I have never written. This is a pretty state of things, isn't it, Miss Wilson, after all her advantages under the influence of moral force and the movement for the higher education of women?"

"By your own admission, the fault seems to lie upon your moral training and not upon hers."

"The fault was in the conditions of our association. Why they should have attracted me so strongly at first, and repelled me so horribly afterwards, is one of those devil's riddles which will not be answered until we shall have traced all the yet unsuspected reactions of our inveterate dishonesty. But I am wasting your time, I fear. You sent for Smilash, and I have responded by practically annihilating him. In public, however, you must still bear with his antics. One moment more. I had forgotten to ask you whether you are interested in the shepherd whose wife you sheltered on the night of the storm?"

"He assured me, before he took his wife away, that he was comfortably settled in a lodging in Lyvern."

"Yes. Very comfortably settled indeed. For half-a-crown a week he obtained permission to share a spacious drawing-room with two other families in a ten-roomed house in not much better repair than his blown-down hovel. This house yields to its landlord over two hundred a year, or rather more than the rent of a commodious mansion in South Kensington. It is a troublesome rent to collect, but on the other hand there is no expenditure

for repairs or sanitation, which are not considered necessary in tenement houses. Our friend has to walk three miles to his work and three miles back. Exercise is a capital thing for a student or a city clerk, but to a shepherd who has been in the fields all day, a long walk at the end of his work is somewhat too much of a good thing. He begged for an increase of wages to compensate him for the loss of the hut, but Sir John pointed out to him that if he was not satisfied his place could be easily filled by less exorbitant shepherds. Sir John even condescended to explain that the laws of political economy bind employers to buy labor in the cheapest market, and our poor friend, just as ignorant of economics as Sir John, of course did not know that this was untrue. However, as labor is actually so purchased everywhere except in Downing Street and a few other privileged spots, I suggested that our friend should go to some place where his market price would be higher than in merry England. He was willing enough to do so, but unable from want of means. So I lent him a trifle, and now he is on his way to Australia. Workmen are the geese that lay the golden eggs, but they fly away sometimes. I hear a gong sounding, to remind me of the flight of time and the value of your share of it. Good-morning!"

Miss Wilson was suddenly moved not to let him go without an appeal to his better nature. "Mr. Trefusis," she said, "excuse me, but are you not, in your generosity to others a little forgetful of your duty to yourself; and--"

"The first and hardest of all duties!" he exclaimed. "I beg your pardon for interrupting you. It was only to plead guilty."

"I cannot admit that it is the first of all duties, but it is sometimes perhaps the hardest, as you say. Still, you could surely do yourself more justice without any great effort. If you wish to live humbly, you can do so without pretending to be an uneducated man and without taking an irritating and absurd name. Why on earth do you call yourself Smilash?"

"I confess that the name has been a failure. I took great pains, in constructing it, to secure a pleasant impression. It is not a mere invention, but a compound of the words smile and eyelash. A smile suggests good humor; eyelashes soften the expression and are the only features that never blemish a face. Hence Smilash is a sound that should cheer and propitiate. Yet it exasperates. It is really very odd that it should have that effect, unless it is that it raises expectations which I am unable to satisfy."

Miss Wilson looked at him doubtfully. He remained perfectly grave. There was a pause. Then, as if she had made up her mind to be offended, she said, "Good-morning," shortly.

"Good-morning, Miss Wilson. The son of a millionaire, like the son of a king, is seldom free from mental disease. I am just mad enough to be a mountebank. If I were a little madder, I should perhaps really believe myself Smilash instead of merely acting him. Whether you ask me to forget myself for a moment, or to remember myself for a moment, I reply that I am the son of my father, and cannot. With my egotism, my charlatanry, my tongue, and my habit of having my own way, I am fit for no calling but that of saviour of mankind--just of the sort they like." After an impressive pause he turned slowly and left the room.

"I wonder," he said, as he crossed the landing, "whether, by judiciously losing my way, I can catch a glimpse of that girl who is like a golden idol?"

Downstairs, on his way to the door, he saw Agatha coming towards him, occupied with a book which she was tossing up to the ceiling and catching. Her melancholy expression, habitual in her lonely moments, showed that she was not amusing herself, but giving vent to her restlessness. As her gaze travelled upward, following the flight of the volume, it was arrested by Smilash. The book fell to the floor. He picked it up and handed it to her, saying:

"And, in good time, here is the golden idol!"

"What?" said Agatha, confused.

"I call you the golden idol," he said. "When we are apart I always imagine your face as a face of gold, with eyes and teeth of bdellium, or chalcedony, or agate, or any wonderful unknown stones of appropriate colors."

Agatha, witless and dumb, could only look down deprecatingly.

"You think you ought to be angry with me, and you do not know exactly how to make me feel that you are so. Is that it?"

"No. Quite the contrary. At least--I mean that you are wrong. I am the most commonplace person you can imagine--if you only knew. No matter what I may look, I mean."

"How do you know that you are commonplace?"

"Of course I know," said Agatha, her eyes wandering uneasily.

"Of course you do not know; you cannot see yourself as others see you. For instance, you have never thought of yourself as a golden idol."

"But that is absurd. You are quite mistaken about me."

"Perhaps so. I know, however, that your face is not really made of gold and that it has not the same charm for you that it has for others--for me."

"I must go," said Agatha, suddenly in haste.

"When shall we meet again?"

"I don't know," she said, with a growing sense of alarm. "I really must go."

"Believe me, your hurry is only imaginary. Do you fancy that you are behaving in a manner quite unworthy of yourself, and that a net is closing round you?"

"No. Nothing of the sort!"

"Then why are you so anxious to get away?"

"I don't know," said Agatha, affecting to laugh as he looked sceptically at her from beneath his lowered eyelids. "Perhaps I do feel a little like that; but not so much as you say."

"I will explain the emotion to you," he said, with a subdued ardor that affected Agatha strangely. "But first tell me whether it is new to you or not."

"It is not an emotion at all. I did not say that it was."

"Do not be afraid of it. It is only being alone with a man whom you have bewitched. You would be mistress of the situation if you only knew how to manage a lover. It is far easier than managing a horse, or skating, or playing the piano, or half a dozen other feats of which you think nothing."

Agatha colored and raised her head.

"Forgive me," he said, interrupting the action. "I am trying to offend you in order to save myself from falling in love with you, and I have not the heart to let myself succeed. On your life, do not listen to me or believe me. I have no right to say these things to you. Some fiend enters into me when I am at your side. You should wear a veil, Agatha."

She blushed, and stood burning and tingling, her presence of mind gone, and her chief sensation one of relief to hear--for she did not dare to see--that he was departing. Her consciousness was in a delicious confusion, with the one definite thought in it that she had won her lover at last. The tone of Trefusis's voice, rich with truth and earnestness, his quick insight, and his passionate warning to her not to heed him, convinced her that she had entered into a relation destined to influence her whole life.

"And yet," she said remorsefully, "I cannot love him as he loves me. I am selfish, cold, calculating, worldly, and have doubted until now whether such a thing as love really existed. If I could only love him recklessly and wholly, as he loves me!"

Smilash was also soliloquizing as he went on his way.

"Now I have made the poor child--who was so anxious that I should not mistake her for a supernaturally gifted and lovely woman as happy as an angel; and so is that fine girl whom they call Jane Carpenter. I hope they won't exchange confidences on the subject."