Trollope Anthony

# Ayala's Angel

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**Trollope A.**

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# Содержание

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## VOL. I

## CHAPTER I.
## THE TWO SISTERS

When Egbert Dormer died he left his two daughters utterly penniless upon the world, and it must be said of Egbert Dormer that nothing else could have been expected of him. The two girls were both pretty, but Lucy, who was twenty-one, was supposed to be simple and comparatively unattractive, whereas Ayala was credited, – as her somewhat romantic name might show, – with poetic charm and a taste for romance. Ayala when her father died was nineteen.

We must begin yet a little earlier and say that there had been, – and had died many years before the death of Egbert Dormer, – a clerk in the Admiralty, by name Reginald Dosett, who, and whose wife, had been conspicuous for personal beauty. Their charms were gone, but the records of them had been left in various grandchildren. There had been a son born to Mr. Dosett, who was also a Reginald and a clerk in the Admiralty, and who also, in his turn, had been a handsome man. With him, in his decadence, the reader will become acquainted. There were also two daughters, whose reputation for perfect feminine beauty had never been contested. The elder had married a city man of wealth, – of wealth when he married her, but who had become enormously wealthy by the time of our story. He had when he married been simply Mister, but was now Sir Thomas Tringle, Baronet, and was senior partner in the great firm of Travers and Treason. Of Traverses and Treasons there were none left in these days, and Mr. Tringle was supposed to manipulate all the millions with which the great firm in Lombard Street was concerned. He had married old Mr. Dosett's eldest daughter, Emmeline, who was now Lady Tringle, with a house at the top of Queen's Gate, rented at £1,500 a year, with a palatial moor in Scotland, with a seat in Sussex, and as many carriages and horses as would suit an archduchess. Lady Tringle had everything in the world; a son, two daughters, and an open-handed stout husband, who was said to have told her that money was a matter of no consideration.

The second Miss Dosett, Adelaide Dosett, who had been considerably younger than her sister, had insisted upon giving herself to Egbert Dormer, the artist, whose death we commemorated in our first line. But she had died before her husband. They who remembered the two Miss Dosetts as girls were wont to declare that, though Lady Tringle might, perhaps, have had the advantage in perfection of feature and in unequalled symmetry, Adelaide had been the more attractive from expression and brilliancy. To her Lord Sizes had offered his hand and coronet, promising to abandon for her sake all the haunts of his matured life. To her Mr. Tringle had knelt before he had taken the elder sister. For her Mr. Program, the popular preacher of the day, for a time so totally lost himself that he was nearly minded to go over to Rome. She was said to have had offers from a widowed Lord Chancellor and from a Russian prince. Her triumphs would have quite obliterated that of her sister had she not insisted on marrying Egbert Dormer.

Then there had been, and still was, Reginald Dosett, the son of old Dosett, and the eldest of the family. He too had married, and was now living with his wife; but to them had no children been born, luckily, as he was a poor man. Alas, to a beautiful son it is not often that beauty can be a fortune as to a daughter. Young Reginald Dosett, – he is anything now but young, – had done but little for himself with his beauty, having simply married the estimable daughter of a brother clerk. Now, at the age of

fifty, he had his £900 a year from his office, and might have lived in fair comfort had he not allowed a small millstone of debt to hang round his neck from his earlier years. But still he lived creditably in a small but very genteel house at Notting Hill, and would have undergone any want rather than have declared himself to be a poor man to his rich relations the Tringles.

Such were now the remaining two children of old Mr. Dosett, – Lady Tringle, namely, and Reginald Dosett, the clerk in the Admiralty. Adelaide, the beauty in chief of the family, was gone; and now also her husband, the improvident artist, had followed his wife. Dormer had been by no means a failing artist. He had achieved great honour, – had at an early age been accepted into the Royal Academy, – had sold pictures to illustrious princes and more illustrious dealers, had been engraved and had lived to see his own works resold at five times their original prices. Egbert Dormer might also have been a rich man. But he had a taste for other beautiful things besides a wife. The sweetest little phaeton that was to cost nothing, the most perfect bijou of a little house at South Kensington, – he had boasted that it might have been packed without trouble in his brother-in-law Tringle's dining-room, – the simplest little gem for his wife, just a blue set of china for his dinner table, just a painted cornice for his studio, just satin hangings for his drawing-room, – and a few simple ornaments for his little girls; these with a few rings for himself, and velvet suits of clothing in which to do his painting; these, with a few little dinner parties to show off his blue china, were the first and last of his extravagances. But when he went, and when his pretty things were sold, there was not enough to cover his debts. There was, however, a sweet savour about his name. When he died it was said of him that his wife's death had killed him. He had dropped his pallette, refused to finish the ordered portrait of a princess, and had simply turned himself round and died.

Then there were the two daughters, Lucy and Ayala. It should be explained that though a proper family intercourse had always been maintained between the three families, the Tringles, the Dormers, and the Dosetts, there had never been cordiality between the first and the two latter. The wealth of the Tringles had seemed to convey with it a fetid odour. Egbert Dormer, with every luxury around him which money could purchase, had affected to despise the heavy magnificence of the Tringles. It may be that he affected a fashion higher than that which the Tringles really attained. Reginald Dosett, who was neither brilliant nor fashionable, was in truth independent, and, perhaps, a little thin-skinned. He would submit to no touch of arrogance from Sir Thomas; and Sir Thomas seemed to carry arrogance in his brow and in his paunch. It was there rather, perhaps, than in his heart; but there are men to whom a knack of fumbling their money in their pockets and of looking out from under penthouse brows over an expanse of waistcoat, gives an air of overweening pride which their true idiosyncracies may not justify. To Dosett had, perhaps, been spoken a word or two which on some occasion he had inwardly resented, and from thenceforward he had ever been ready to league with Dormer against the "bullionaire," as they agreed to call Sir Thomas. Lady Tringle had even said a word to her sister, Mrs. Dormer, as to expenses, and that had never been forgiven by the artist. So things were when Mrs. Dormer died first; and so they remained when her husband followed her.

Then there arose a sudden necessity for action, which, for a while, brought Reginald Dosett into connexion with Sir Thomas and Lady Tringle. Something must be done for the poor girls. That the something should come out of the pocket of Sir Thomas would have seemed to be natural. Money with him was no object, – not at all. Another girl or two would be nothing to him, – as regarded simple expenditure. But the care of a human being is an important matter, and so Sir Thomas knew. Dosett had not a child at all, and would be the better for such a windfall. Dosett he supposed to be, – in his, Dosett's way, – fairly well off. So he made this proposition. He would take one girl and let Dosett take the other. To this Lady Tringle added her proviso, that she should have the choice. To her nerves affairs of taste were of such paramount importance! To this Dosett yielded. The matter was decided in Lady Tringle's back drawing-room. Mrs. Dosett was not even consulted in that matter of choice, having already acknowledged the duty of mothering a motherless child. Dosett had thought that the bullionaire should have said a word as to some future provision for the penniless girl, for whom he

would be able to do so little. But Sir Thomas had said no such word, and Dosett, himself, lacked both the courage and the coarseness to allude to the matter. Then Lady Tringle declared that she must have Ayala, and so the matter was settled. Ayala the romantic; Ayala the poetic! It was a matter of course that Ayala should be chosen. Ayala had already been made intimate with the magnificent saloons of the Tringles, and had been felt by Lady Tringle to be an attraction. Her long dark black locks, which had never hitherto been tucked up, which were never curled, which were never so long as to be awkward, were already known as being the loveliest locks in London. She sang as though Nature had intended her to be a singing-bird, – requiring no education, no labour. She had been once for three months in Paris, and French had come naturally to her. Her father had taught her something of his art, and flatterers had already begun to say that she was born to be the one great female artist of the world. Her hands, her feet, her figure were perfect. Though she was as yet but nineteen, London had already begun to talk about Ayala Dormer. Of course Lady Tringle chose Ayala, not remembering at the moment that her own daughters might probably be superseded by their cousin.

And, therefore, as Lady Tringle said herself to Lucy with her sweetest smile – Mrs. Dosett had chosen Lucy. The two girls were old enough to know something of the meaning of such a choice. Ayala, the younger, was to be adopted into immense wealth, and Lucy was to be given up to comparative poverty. She knew nothing of her uncle Dosett's circumstances, but the genteel house at Notting Hill, – No. 3, Kingsbury Crescent, – was known to her, and was but a poor affair as compared even with the bijou in which she had hitherto lived. Her aunt Dosett never rose to any vehicle beyond a four-wheeler, and was careful even in thinking of that accommodation. Ayala would be whirled about the park by a wire-wig and a pair of brown horses which they had heard it said were not to be matched in London. Ayala would be carried with her aunt and her cousin to the show-room of Madame Tonsonville, the great French milliner of Bond Street, whereas she, Lucy, might too probably be called on to make her own gowns. All the fashion of Queen's Gate, something, perhaps, of the fashion of Eaton Square, would be open to Ayala. Lucy understood enough to know that Ayala's own charms might probably cause still more August gates to be opened to her, whereas Aunt Dosett entered no gates. It was quite natural that Ayala should be chosen. Lucy acknowledged as much to herself. But they were sisters, and had been so near! By what a chasm would they be dissevered, now so far asunder!

Lucy herself was a lovely girl, and knew her own loveliness. She was fairer than Ayala, somewhat taller, and much more quiet in her demeanour. She was also clever, but her cleverness did not show itself so quickly. She was a musician, whereas her sister could only sing. She could really draw, whereas her sister would rush away into effects in which the drawing was not always very excellent. Lucy was doing the best she could for herself, knowing something of French and German, though as yet not very fluent with her tongue. The two girls were, in truth, both greatly gifted; but Ayala had the gift of showing her talent without thought of showing it. Lucy saw it all, and knew that she was outshone; but how great had been the price of the outshining!

The artist's house had been badly ordered, and the two girls were of better disposition and better conduct than might have been expected from such fitful training. Ayala had been the father's pet, and Lucy the mother's. Parents do ill in making pets, and here they had done ill. Ayala had been taught to think herself the favourite, because the artist, himself, had been more prominent before the world than his wife. But the evil had not been lasting enough to have made bad feeling between the sisters. Lucy knew that her sister had been preferred to her, but she had been self-denying enough to be aware that some such preference was due to Ayala. She, too, admired Ayala, and loved her with her whole heart. And Ayala was always good to her, – had tried to divide everything, – had assumed no preference as a right. The two were true sisters. But when it was decided that Lucy was to go to Kingsbury Crescent the difference was very great. The two girls, on their father's death, had been taken to the great red brick house in Queen's Gate, and from thence, three or four days after the

funeral, Lucy was to be transferred to her Aunt Dosett. Hitherto there had been little between them but weeping for their father. Now had come the hour of parting.

The tidings had been communicated to Lucy, and to Lucy alone, by Aunt Tringle, – "As you are the eldest, dear, we think that you will be best able to be a comfort to your aunt," said Lady Tringle.

"I will do the best I can, Aunt Emmeline," said Lucy, declaring to herself that, in giving such a reason, her aunt was lying basely.

"I am sure you will. Poor dear Ayala is younger than her cousins, and will be more subject to them." So in truth was Lucy younger than her cousins, but of that she said nothing. "I am sure you will agree with me that it is best that we should have the youngest."

"Perhaps it is, Aunt Emmeline."

"Sir Thomas would not have had it any other way," said Lady Tringle, with a little severity, feeling that Lucy's accord had hardly been as generous as it should be. But she recovered herself quickly, remembering how much it was that Ayala was to get, how much that Lucy was to lose. "But, my dear, we shall see you very often, you know. It is not so far across the park; and when we do have a few parties again – "

"Oh, aunt, I am not thinking of that."

"Of course not. We can none of us think of it just now. But when the time does come of course we shall always have you, just as if you were one of us." Then her aunt gave her a roll of bank-notes, a little present of twenty-five pounds, to begin the world with, and told her that the carriage should take her to Kingsbury Crescent on the following morning. On the whole Lucy behaved well and left a pleasant impression on her aunt's mind. The difference between Queen's Gate and Kingsbury Crescent, – between Queen's Gate and Kingsbury Crescent for life, – was indeed great!

"I wish it were you, with all my heart," said Ayala, clinging to her sister.

"It could not have been me."

"Why not!"

"Because you are so pretty and you are so clever."

"No!"

"Yes! If we were to be separated of course it would be so. Do not suppose, dear, that I am disappointed."

"I am."

"If I can only like Aunt Margaret," – Aunt Margaret was Mrs. Dosett, with whom neither of the girls had hitherto become intimate, and who was known to be quiet, domestic, and economical, but who had also been spoken of as having a will of her own, – "I shall do better with her than you would, Ayala."

"I don't see why."

"Because I can remain quiet longer than you. It will be very quiet. I wonder how we shall see each other! I cannot walk across the park alone."

"Uncle Reg will bring you."

"Not often, I fear. Uncle Reg has enough to do with his office."

"You can come in a cab."

"Cabs cost money, Ayey dear."

"But Uncle Thomas – "

"We had better understand one or two things, Ayala. Uncle Thomas will pay everything for you, and as he is very rich things will come as they are wanted. There will be cabs, and if not cabs, carriages. Uncle Reg must pay for me, and he is very very kind to do so. But as he is not rich, there will be no carriages, and not a great many cabs. It is best to understand it all."

"But they will send for you."

"That's as they please. I don't think they will very often. I would not for the world put you against Uncle Thomas, but I have a feeling that I shall never get on with him. But you will never separate yourself from me, Ayala!"

"Separate myself!"

"You will not – not be my sister because you will be one of these rich ones?"

"Oh, I wish, – I wish that I were to be the poor one. I'm sure I should like it best. I never cared about being rich. Oh, Lucy, can't we make them change?"

"No, Ayey, my own, we can't make them change. And if we could, we wouldn't. It is altogether best that you should be a rich Tringle and that I should be a poor Dosett."

"I will always be a Dormer," said Ayala, proudly.

"And I will always be so too, my pet. But you should be a bright Dormer among the Tringles, and I will be a dull Dormer among the Dosetts. I shall begrudge nothing, if only we can see each other."

So the two girls were parted, the elder being taken away to Kingsbury Crescent and the latter remaining with her rich relations at Queen's Gate. Ayala had not probably realized the great difference of their future positions. To her the attractions of wealth and the privations of comparative poverty had not made themselves as yet palpably plain. They do not become so manifest to those to whom the wealth falls, – at any rate, not in early life, – as to the opposite party. If the other lot had fallen to Ayala she might have felt it more keenly.

Lucy felt it keenly enough. Without any longing after the magnificence of the Tringle mansion she knew how great was the fall from her father's well-assorted luxuries and prettinesses down to the plain walls, tables, and chairs of her Uncle Dosett's house. Her aunt did not subscribe to Mudie's. The old piano had not been tuned for the last ten years. The parlour-maid was a cross old woman. Her aunt always sat in the dining-room through the greater part of the day, and of all rooms the dining-room in Kingsbury Crescent was the dingiest. Lucy understood very well to what she was going. Her father and mother were gone. Her sister was divided from her. Her life offered for the future nothing to her. But with it all she carried a good courage. There was present to her an idea of great misfortune; but present to her at the same time an idea also that she would do her duty.

# CHAPTER II.
# LUCY WITH HER AUNT DOSETT

For some days Lucy found herself to be absolutely crushed, – in the first place, by a strong resolution to do some disagreeable duty, and then by a feeling that there was no duty the doing of which was within her reach. It seemed to her that her whole life was a blank. Her father's house had been a small affair and considered to be poor when compared with the Tringle mansion, but she now became aware that everything there had in truth abounded. In one little room there had been two or three hundred beautifully bound books. That Mudie's unnumbered volumes should come into the house as they were wanted had almost been as much a provision of nature as water, gas, and hot rolls for breakfast. A piano of the best kind, and always in order, had been a first necessary of life, and, like other necessaries, of course, forthcoming. There had been the little room in which the girls painted, joining their father's studio and sharing its light, surrounded by every pretty female appliance. Then there had always been visitors. The artists from Kensington had been wont to gather there, and the artists' daughters, and perhaps the artists' sons. Every day had had its round of delights, – its round of occupations, as the girls would call them. There had been some reading, some painting, some music, – perhaps a little needlework and a great deal of talking.

How little do we know how other people live in the houses close to us! We see the houses looking like our own, and we see the people come out of them looking like ourselves. But a Chinaman is not more different from the English John Bull than is No. 10 from No. 11. Here there are books, paintings, music, wine, a little dilettanti getting-up of subjects of the day, a little dilettanti thinking on great affairs, perhaps a little dilettanti religion; few domestic laws, and those easily broken; few domestic duties, and those easily evaded; breakfast when you will, with dinner almost as little binding, with much company and acknowledged aptitude for idle luxury. That is life at No. 10. At No. 11 everything is cased in iron. There shall be equal plenty, but at No. 11 even plenty is a bondage. Duty rules everything, and it has come to be acknowledged that duty is to be hard. So many hours of needlework, so many hours of books, so many hours of prayer! That all the household shall shiver before daylight, is a law, the breach of which by any member either augurs sickness or requires condign punishment. To be comfortable is a sin; to laugh is almost equal to bad language. Such and so various is life at No. 10 and at No. 11.

From one extremity, as far removed, to another poor Lucy had been conveyed; though all the laws were not exactly carried out in Kingsbury Crescent as they have been described at No. 11. The enforced prayers were not there, nor the early hours. It was simply necessary that Lucy should be down to breakfast at nine, and had she not appeared nothing violent would have been said. But it was required of her that she should endure a life which was altogether without adornment. Uncle Dosett himself, as a clerk in the Admiralty, had a certain position in the world which was sufficiently maintained by decent apparel, a well-kept, slight, grey whisker, and an umbrella which seemed never to have been violated by use. Dosett was popular at his office, and was regarded by his brother clerks as a friend. But no one was acquainted with his house and home. They did not dine with him, nor he with them. There are such men in all public offices, – not the less respected because of the quiescence of their lives. It was known of him that he had burdens, though it was not known what his burdens were. His friends, therefore, were intimate with him as far as the entrance into Somerset House, – where his duties lay, – and not beyond it. Lucy was destined to know the other side of his affairs, the domestic side, which was as quiet as the official side. The link between them, which consisted of a journey by the Underground Railway to the Temple Station, and a walk home along the Embankment and across the parks and Kensington Gardens, was the pleasantest part of Dosett's life.

Mr. Dosett's salary has been said to be £900 per annum. What a fund of comfort there is in the word! When the youth of nineteen enters an office how far beyond want would he think himself

should he ever reach the pecuniary paradise of £900 a-year! How he would see all his friends, and in return be seen of them! But when the income has been achieved its capabilities are found to be by no means endless. And Dosett in the earlier spheres of his married life had unfortunately anticipated something of such comforts. For a year or two he had spent a little money imprudently. Something which he had expected had not come to him; and, as a result, he had been forced to borrow, and to insure his life for the amount borrowed. Then, too, when that misfortune as to the money came, – came from the non-realization of certain claims which his wife had been supposed to possess, – provision had also to be made for her. In this way an assurance office eat up a large fraction of his income, and left him with means which in truth were very straitened. Dosett at once gave up all glories of social life, settled himself in Kingsbury Crescent, and resolved to satisfy himself with his walk across the park and his frugal dinner afterwards. He never complained to any one, nor did his wife. He was a man small enough to be contented with a thin existence, but far too great to ask any one to help him to widen it. Sir Thomas Tringle never heard of that £175 paid annually to the assurance office, nor had Lady Tringle, Dosett's sister, even heard of it. When it was suggested to him that he should take one of the Dormer girls, he consented to take her and said nothing of the assurance office.

Mrs. Dosett had had her great blow in life, and had suffered more perhaps than her husband. This money had been expected. There had been no doubt of the money, – at any rate on her part. It did not depend on an old gentleman with or without good intentions, but simply on his death. There was to be ever so much of it, four or five hundred a-year, which would last for ever. When the old gentleman died, which took place some ten years after Dosett's marriage, it was found that the money, tied tight as it had been by half-a-dozen lawyers, had in some fashion vanished. Whither it had gone is little to our purpose, but it had gone. Then there came a great crash upon the Dosetts, which she for a while had been hardly able to endure.

But when she had collected herself together after the crash, and had made up her mind, as had Dosett also, to the nature of the life which they must in future lead, she became more stringent in it even than he. He could bear and say nothing; but she, in bearing, found herself compelled to say much. It had been her fault, – the fault of people on her side, – and she would fain have fed her husband with the full flowery potato while she ate only the rind. She told him, unnecessarily, over and over again, that she had ruined him by her marriage. No such idea was ever in his head. The thing had come, and so it must be. There was food to eat, potatoes enough for both, and a genteel house in which to live. He could still be happy if she would not groan. A certain amount of groaning she did postpone while in his presence. The sewing of seams, and the darning of household linen, which in his eyes amounted to groaning, was done in his absence. After their genteel dinner he would sleep a little, and she would knit. He would have his glass of wine, but would make his bottle of port last almost for a week. This was the house to which Lucy Dormer was brought when Mr. Dosett had consented to share with Sir Thomas the burden left by the death of the improvident artist.

When a month passed by Lucy began to think that time itself would almost drive her mad. Her father had died early in September. The Tringles had then, of course, been out of town, but Sir Thomas and his wife had found themselves compelled to come up on such an occasion. Something they knew must be done about the girls, and they had not chosen that that something should be done in their absence. Mr. Dosett was also enjoying his official leave of absence for the year, but was enjoying it within the economical precincts of Kingsbury Crescent. There was but seldom now an excursion for him or his wife to the joys of the country. Once, some years ago, they had paid a visit to the palatial luxuries of Glenbogie, but the delights of the place had not paid for the expense of the long journey. They, therefore, had been at hand to undertake their duties. Dosett and Tringle, with a score of artists, had followed poor Dormer to his grave in Kensal Green, and then Dosett and Tringle had parted again, probably not to see each other for another term of years.

"My dear, what do you like to do with your time?" Mrs. Dosett said to her niece, after the first week. At this time Lucy's wardrobe was not yet of a nature to need much work over its ravages. The

Dormer girls had hardly known where their frocks had come from when they wanted frocks, – hardly with more precision than the Tringle girls. Frocks had come – dark, gloomy frocks, lately, alas! And these, too, had now come a second time. Let creditors be ever so unsatisfied, new raiment will always be found for mourning families. Everything about Lucy was nearly new. The need of repairing would come upon her by degrees, but it had not come as yet. Therefore there had seemed, to the anxious aunt, to be a necessity for some such question as the above.

"I'll do anything you like, aunt," said Lucy.

"It is not for me, my dear. I get through a deal of work, and am obliged to do so." She was, at this time, sitting with a sheet in her lap, which she was turning. Lucy had, indeed, once offered to assist, but her assistance had been rejected. This had been two days since, and she had not renewed the proposal as she should have done. This had been mainly from bashfulness. Though the work would certainly be distasteful to her, she would do it. But she had not liked to seem to interfere, not having as yet fallen into ways of intimacy with her aunt. "I don't want to burden you with my task-work," continued Mrs. Dosett, "but I am afraid you seem to be listless."

"I was reading till just before you spoke," said Lucy, again turning her eyes to the little volume of poetry, which was one of the few treasures which she had brought away with her from her old home.

"Reading is very well, but I do not like it as an excuse, Lucy." Lucy's anger boiled within her when she was told of an excuse, and she declared to herself that she could never like her aunt. "I am quite sure that for young girls, as well as for old women, there must be a great deal of waste time unless there be needle and thread always about. And I know, too, unless ladies are well off, they cannot afford to waste time any more than gentlemen."

In the whole course of her life nothing so much like scolding as this had ever been addressed to her. So at least thought Lucy at that moment. Mrs. Dosett had intended the remarks all in good part, thinking them to be simply fitting from an aunt to a niece. It was her duty to give advice, and for the giving of such advice some day must be taken as the beginning. She had purposely allowed a week to run by, and now she had spoken her word, – as she thought in good season.

To Lucy it was a new and most bitter experience. Though she was reading the "Idylls of the King," or pretending to read them, she was, in truth, thinking of all that had gone from her. Her mind had, at that moment, been intent upon her mother, who, in all respects, had been so different from this careful, sheet-darning housewife of a woman. And in thinking of her mother there had no doubt been regrets for many things of which she would not have ventured to speak as sharing her thoughts with the memory of her mother, but which were nevertheless there to add darkness to the retrospective. Everything behind had been so bright, and everything behind had gone away from her! Everything before was so gloomy, and everything before must last for so long! After her aunt's lecture about wasted time Lucy sat silent for a few minutes, and then burst into uncontrolled tears.

"I did not mean to vex you," said her aunt.

"I was thinking of my – darling, darling mamma," sobbed Lucy.

"Of course, Lucy, you will think of her. How should you not? And of your father. Those are sorrows which must be borne. But sorrows such as those are much lighter to the busy than to the idle. I sometimes think that the labourers grieve less for those they love than we do just because they have not time to grieve."

"I wish I were a labourer then," said Lucy, through her tears.

"You may be if you will. The sooner you begin to be a labourer the better for yourself and for those about you."

That Aunt Dosett's voice was harsh was not her fault, – nor that in the obduracy of her daily life she had lost much of her original softness. She had simply meant to be useful, and to do her duty; but in telling Lucy that it would be better that the labouring should be commenced at once for the sake of "those about you," – who could only be Aunt Dosett herself, – she had seemed to the girl to be harsh, selfish, and almost unnatural. The volume of poetry fell from her hand, and she jumped up

from the chair quickly. "Give it me at once," she said, taking hold of the sheet, – which was not itself a pleasant object; Lucy had never seen such a thing at the bijou. "Give it me at once," she said, and clawed the long folds of linen nearly out of her aunt's lap.

"I did not mean anything of the kind," said Aunt Dosett. "You should not take me up in that way. I am speaking only for your good, because I know that you should not dawdle away your existence. Leave the sheet."

Lucy did leave the sheet, and then, sobbing violently, ran out of the room up to her own chamber. Mrs. Dosett determined that she would not follow her. She partly forgave the girl because of her sorrows, partly reminded herself that she was not soft and facile as had been her sister-in-law, Lucy's mother; and then, as she continued her work, she assured herself that it would be best to let her niece have her cry out upstairs. Lucy's violence had astonished her for a moment, but she had taught herself to think it best to allow such little ebullitions to pass off by themselves.

Lucy, when she was alone, flung herself upon her bed in absolute agony. She thought that she had misbehaved, and yet how cruel, – how harsh had been her aunt's words! If she, the quiet one, had misbehaved, what would Ayala have done? And how was she to find strength with which to look forward to the future? She struggled hard with herself for a resolution. Should she determine that she would henceforward darn sheets morning, noon, and night till she worked her fingers to the bone? Perhaps there had been something of truth in that assertion of her aunt's that the labourers have no time to grieve. As everything else was shut out from her, it might be well for her to darn sheets. Should she rush down penitent and beg her aunt to allow her to commence at once?

She would have done it as far as the sheets were concerned, but she could not do it as regarded her aunt. She could put herself into unison with the crumpled soiled linen, but not with the hard woman.

Oh, how terrible was the change! Her father and her mother who had been so gentle to her! All the sweet prettinesses of her life! All her occupations, all her friends, all her delights! Even Ayala was gone from her! How was she to bear it? She begrudged Ayala nothing, – no, nothing. But yet it was hard! Ayala was to have everything. Aunt Emmeline, – though they had not hitherto been very fond of Aunt Emmeline, – was sweetness itself as compared with this woman. "The sooner you begin to labour the better for yourself and those about you." Would it not have been fitter that she should have been sent at once to some actual poor-house in which there would have been no mistake as to her position?

That it should all have been decided for her, for her and Ayala, not by any will of their own, not by any concert between themselves, but simply by the fantasy of another! Why should she thus be made a slave to the fantasy of any one! Let Ayala have her uncle's wealth and her aunt's palaces at her command, and she would walk out simply a pauper into the world, – into some workhouse, so that at least she need not be obedient to the harsh voice and the odious common sense of her Aunt Dosett! But how should she take herself to some workhouse? In what way could she prove her right to be admitted even then? It seemed to her that the same decree which had admitted Ayala into the golden halls of the fairies had doomed her not only to poverty, but to slavery. There was no escape for her from her aunt and her aunt's sermons. "Oh, Ayala, my darling, – my own one; oh, Ayala, if you did but know!" she said to herself. What would Ayala think, how would Ayala bear it, could she but guess by what a gulf was her heaven divided from her sister's hell! "I will never tell her," she said to herself. "I will die, and she shall never know."

As she lay there sobbing all the gilded things of the world were beautiful in her eyes. Alas, yes, it was true. The magnificence of the mansion at Queen's Gate, the glories of Glenbogie, the closely studied comforts of Merle Park, as the place in Sussex was called, all the carriages and horses, Madame Tonsonville and all the draperies, the seats at the Albert Hall into which she had been accustomed to go with as much ease as into her bed-room, the box at the opera, the pretty furniture, the frequent gems, even the raiment which would make her pleasing to the eyes of men

whom she would like to please – all these things grew in her eyes and became beautiful. No. 3, Kingsbury Crescent, was surely, of all places on the earth's surface, the most ugly. And yet, – yet she had endeavoured to do her duty. "If it had been the workhouse I could have borne it," she said to herself; "but not to be the slave of my Aunt Dosett!" Again she appealed to her sister, "Oh, Ayala, if you did but know it!" Then she remembered herself, declaring that it might have been worse to Ayala than even to her. "If one had to bear it, it was better for me," she said, as she struggled to prepare herself for her uncle's dinner.

# CHAPTER III.
# LUCY'S TROUBLES

The evening after the affair with the sheet went off quietly, as did many days and many evenings. Mrs. Dosett was wise enough to forget the little violence and to forget also the feeling which had been displayed. When Lucy first asked for some household needlework, which she did with a faltering voice and shame-faced remembrance of her fault, her aunt took it all in good part and gave her a task somewhat lighter as a beginning than the handling of a sheet. Lucy sat at it and suffered. She went on sitting and suffering. She told herself that she was a martyr at every stitch she made. As she occupied the seat opposite to her aunt's accustomed chair she would hardly speak at all, but would keep her mind always intent on Ayala and the joys of Ayala's life. That they who had been born together, sisters, with equal fortunes, who had so closely lived together, should be sundered so utterly one from the other; that the one should be so exalted and the other so debased! And why? What justice had there been? Could it be from heaven or even from earth that the law had gone forth for such a division of the things of the world between them?

"You have got very little to say to a person?" said Aunt Dosett, one morning. This, too, was a reproach. This, too, was scolding. And yet Aunt Dosett had intended to be as pleasant as she knew how.

"I have very little to say," replied Lucy, with repressed anger.

"But why?"

"Because I am stupid," said Lucy. "Stupid people can't talk. You should have had Ayala."

"I hope you do not envy Ayala her fortune, Lucy?" A woman with any tact would not have asked such a question at such a time. She should have felt that a touch of such irony might be natural, and that unless it were expressed loudly, or shown actively, it might be left to be suppressed by affection and time. But she, as she had grown old, had taught herself to bear disappointment, and thought it wise to teach Lucy to do the same.

"Envy!" said Lucy, not passionately, but after a little pause for thought. "I sometimes think it is very hard to know what envy is."

"Envy, hatred, and malice," said Mrs. Dosett, hardly knowing what she meant by the use of the well-worn words.

"I do know what hatred and malice are," said Lucy. "Do you think I hate Ayala?"

"I am sure you do not."

"Or that I bear her malice?"

"Certainly not."

"If I had the power to take anything from her, would I do it? I love Ayala with my whole heart. Whatever be my misery I would rather bear it than let Ayala have even a share of it. Whatever good things she may have I would not rob her even of a part of them. If there be joy and sorrow to be divided between us I would wish to have the sorrow so that she might have the joy. That is not hatred and malice." Mrs. Dosett looked at her over her spectacles. This was the girl who had declared that she could not speak because she was too stupid! "But, when you ask me whether I envy her, I hardly know," continued Lucy. "I think one does covet one's neighbour's house, in spite of the tenth commandment, even though one does not want to steal it."

Mrs. Dosett repented herself that she had given rise to any conversation at all. Silence, absolute silence, the old silence which she had known for a dozen years before Lucy had come to her, would have been better than this. She was very angry, more angry than she had ever yet been with Lucy; and yet she was afraid to show her anger. Was this the girl's gratitude for all that her uncle was doing for her, – for shelter, food, comfort, for all that she had in the world? Mrs. Dosett knew, though Lucy did not, of the little increased pinchings which had been made necessary by the advent of another

inmate in the house; so many pounds of the meat in the week, and so much bread, and so much tea and sugar! It had all been calculated. In genteel houses such calculation must often be made. And when by degrees, – degrees very quick, – the garments should become worn which Lucy had brought with her, there must be something taken from the tight-fitting income for that need. Arrangements had already been made of which Lucy knew nothing, and already the two glasses of port wine a day had been knocked off from poor Mr. Dosett's comforts. His wife had sobbed in despair when he had said that it should be so. He had declared gin and water to be as supporting as port wine, and the thing had been done. Lucy inwardly had been disgusted by the gin and water, knowing nothing of its history. Her father, who had not always been punctual in paying his wine-merchant's bills, would not have touched gin and water, would not have allowed it to contaminate his table! Everything in Mr. Dosett's house was paid for weekly.

And now Lucy, who had been made welcome to all that the genteel house could afford, who had been taken in as a child, had spoken of her lot as one which was all sorrowful. Bad as it is, – this living in Kingsbury Crescent, – I would rather bear it myself than subject Ayala to such misery! It was thus that she had, in fact, spoken of her new home when she had found it necessary to defend her feelings towards her sister. It was impossible that her aunt should be altogether silent under such treatment. "We have done the best for you that is in our power, Lucy," she said, with a whole load of reproach in her tone.

"Have I complained, aunt?"

"I thought you did."

"Oh, no! You asked me whether I envied Ayala. What was I to say? Perhaps I should have said nothing, but the idea of envying Ayala was painful to me. Of course she – "

"Well?"

"I had better say nothing more, aunt. If I were to pretend to be cheerful I should be false. It is as yet only a few weeks since papa died." Then the work went on in silence between them for the next hour.

And the work went on in solemn silence between them through the winter. It came to pass that the sole excitement of Lucy's life came from Ayala's letters, – the sole excitement except a meeting which took place between the sisters one day. When Lucy was taken to Kingsbury Crescent Ayala was at once carried down to Glenbogie, and from thence there came letters twice a week for six weeks. Ayala's letters, too, were full of sorrow. She, too, had lost her mother, her father, and her sister. Moreover, in her foolish petulance she said things of her Aunt Emmeline, and of the girls, and of Sir Thomas, which ought not to have been written of those who were kind to her. Her cousin Tom, too, she ridiculed, – Tom Tringle, the son-and-heir, – saying that he was a lout who endeavoured to make eyes at her. Oh, how distasteful, how vulgar they were after all that she had known. Perhaps the eldest girl, Augusta, was the worst. She did not think that she could put up with the assumed authority of Augusta. Gertrude was better, but a simpleton. Ayala declared herself to be sad at heart. But then the sweet scenery of Glenbogie, and the colour of the moors, and the glorious heights of Ben Alchan, made some amends. Even in her sorrow she would rave about the beauties of Glenbogie. Lucy, as she read the letters, told herself that Ayala's grief was a grief to be borne, a grief almost to be enjoyed. To sit and be sad with a stream purling by you, how different from the sadness of that dining-room in the Crescent. To look out upon the glories of a mountain, while a tear would now and again force itself into the eye, how much less bitter than the falling of salt drops over a tattered towel.

Lucy, in her answers, endeavoured to repress the groans of her spirit. In the first place she did acknowledge that it did not become her to speak ill of those who were, in truth, her benefactors; and then she was anxious not to declare to Ayala her feeling of the injustice by which their two lots had been defined to them. Though she had failed to control herself once or twice in speaking to her aunt she did control herself in writing her letters. She would never, never, write a word which should make Ayala unnecessarily unhappy. On that she was determined. She would say nothing to explain to Ayala

the unutterable tedium of that downstairs parlour in which they passed their lives, lest Ayala should feel herself to be wounded by the luxurious comforts around her.

It was thus she wrote. Then there came a time in which they were to meet, – just at the beginning of November. The Tringles were going to Rome. They generally did go somewhere. Glenbogie, Merle Park, and the house in Queen's Gate, were not enough for the year. Sir Thomas was to take them to Rome, and then return to London for the manipulation of the millions in Lombard Street. He generally did remain nine months out of the twelve in town, because of the millions, making his visits at Merle Park very short; but Lady Tringle found that change of air was good for the girls. It was her intention now to remain at Rome for two or three months.

The party from Scotland reached Queen's Gate late one Saturday evening, and intended to start early on the Monday. To Ayala, who had made it quite a matter of course that she should see her sister, Lady Tringle had said that in that case a carriage must be sent across. It was awkward, because there were no carriages in London. She had thought that they had all intended to pass through London just as though they were not stopping. Sunday, she had thought, was not to be regarded as being a day at all. Then Ayala flashed up. She had flashed up some times before. Was it supposed that she was not going to see Lucy? Carriage! She would walk across Kensington Gardens, and find the house out all by herself. She would spend the whole day with Lucy, and come back alone in a cab. She was strong enough, at any rate, to have her way so far, that a carriage, wherever it came from, was sent for Lucy about three in the afternoon, and did take her back to Kingsbury Crescent after dinner.

Then at last the sisters were together in Ayala's bed-room. "And now tell me about everything," said Ayala.

But Lucy was resolved that she would not tell anything. "I am so wretched!" That would have been all; but she would not tell her wretchedness. "We are so quiet in Kingsbury Crescent," she said; "you have so much more to talk of."

"Oh, Lucy, I do not like it."

"Not your aunt?"

"She is not the worst, though she sometimes is hard to bear. I can't tell you what it is, but they all seem to think so much of themselves. In the first place they never will say a word about papa."

"Perhaps that is from feeling, Ayey."

"No, it is not. One would know that. But they look down upon papa, who had more in his little finger than they have with all their money."

"Then I should hold my tongue."

"So I do, – about him; but it is very hard. And then Augusta has a way with me, as though she had a right to order me. I certainly will not be ordered by Augusta. You never ordered me."

"Dear Ayey!"

"Augusta is older than you, – of course, ever so much. They make her out twenty-three at her last birthday, but she is twenty-four. But that is not difference enough for ordering, – certainly between cousins. I do hate Augusta."

"I would not hate her."

"How is one to help one's-self? She has a way of whispering to Gertrude, and to her mother, when I am there, which almost kills me. 'If you'll only give me notice I'll go out of the room at once,' I said the other day, and they were all so angry."

"I would not make them angry if I were you, Ayey."

"Why not?"

"Not Sir Thomas, or Aunt Emmeline."

"I don't care a bit for Sir Thomas. I am not sure but he is the most good-natured, though he is so podgy. Of course, when Aunt Emmeline tells me anything I do it."

"It is so important that you should be on good terms with them."

"I don't see it at all," said Ayala, flashing round.

"Aunt Emmeline can do so much for you. We have nothing of our own, – you and I."

"Am I to sell myself because they have got money! No, indeed! No one despises money so much as I do. I will never be other to them than if I had the money, and they were the poor relations."

"That will not do, Ayey."

"I will make it do. They may turn me out if they like. Of course, I know that I should obey my aunt, and so I will. If Sir Thomas told me anything I should do it. But not Augusta." Then, while Lucy was thinking how she might best put into soft words advice which was so clearly needed, Ayala declared another trouble. "But there is worse still."

"What is that?"

"Tom!"

"What does Tom do?"

"You know Tom, Lucy?"

"I have seen him."

"Of all the horrors he is the horridest."

"Does he order you about?"

"No; but he – "

"What is it, Ayey?"

"Oh! Lucy, he is so dreadful. He – "

"You don't mean that he makes love to you?"

"He does. What am I to do, Lucy?"

"Do they know it?"

"Augusta does, I'm sure; and pretends to think that it is my fault. I am sure that there will be a terrible quarrel some day. I told him the day before we left Glenbogie that I should tell his mother. I did indeed. Then he grinned. He is such a fool. And when I laughed he took it all as kindness. I couldn't have helped laughing if I had died for it."

"But he has been left behind."

"Yes, for the present. But he is to come over to us some time after Christmas, when Uncle Tringle has gone back."

"A girl need not be bothered by a lover unless she chooses, Ayey."

"But it will be such a bother to have to talk about it. He looks at me, and is such an idiot. Then Augusta frowns. When I see Augusta frowning I am so angry that I feel like boxing her ears. Do you know, Lucy, that I often think that it will not do, and that I shall have to be sent away. I wish it had been you that they had chosen."

Such was the conversation between the girls. Of what was said everything appertained to Ayala. Of the very nature of Lucy's life not a word was spoken. As Ayala was talking Lucy was constantly thinking of all that might be lost by her sister's imprudence. Even though Augusta might be disagreeable, even though Tom might be a bore, it should all be borne, – borne at any rate for a while, – seeing how terrible would be the alternative. The alternative to Lucy seemed to be Kingsbury Crescent and Aunt Dosett. It did not occur to her to think whether in any possible case Ayala would indeed be added to the Crescent family, or what in that case would become of herself, and whether they two might live with Aunt Dosett, and whether in that case life would not be infinitely improved. Ayala had all that money could do for her, and would have such a look-out into the world from a wealthy house as might be sure at last to bring her some such husband as would be desirable. Ayala, in fact, had everything before her, and Lucy had nothing. Wherefore it became Lucy's duty to warn Ayala, so that she should bear with much, and throw away nothing. If Ayala could only know what life might be, what life was at Kingsbury Crescent, then she would be patient, then she would softly make a confidence with her aunt as to Tom's folly, then she would propitiate Augusta. Not care for money! Ayala had not yet lived in an ugly room and darned sheets all the morning. Ayala had never

sat for two hours between the slumbers of Uncle Dosett and the knitting of Aunt Dosett. Ayala had not been brought into contact with gin and water.

"Oh, Ayala!" she said, as they were going down to dinner together, "do struggle; do bear it. Tell Aunt Emmeline. She will like you to tell her. If Augusta wants you to go anywhere, do go. What does it signify? Papa and mamma are gone, and we are alone." All this she said without a word of allusion to her own sufferings. Ayala made a half promise. She did not think she would go anywhere for Augusta's telling; but she would do her best to satisfy Aunt Emmeline. Then they went to dinner, and after dinner Lucy was taken home without further words between them.

Ayala wrote long letters on her journey, full of what she saw, and full of her companions. From Paris she wrote, and then from Turin, and then again on their immediate arrival at Rome. Her letters were most imprudent as written from the close vicinity of her aunt and cousin. It was such a comfort that that oaf Tom had been left behind. Uncle Tringle was angry because he did not get what he liked to eat. Aunt Emmeline gave that courier such a terrible life, sending for him every quarter of an hour. Augusta would talk first French and then Italian, of which no one could understand a word. Gertrude was so sick with travelling that she was as pale as a sheet. Nobody seemed to care for anything. She could not get her aunt to look at the Campanile at Florence, or her cousins to know one picture from another. "As for pictures, I am quite sure that Mangle's angels would do as well as Raffael's." Mangle was a brother academician whom their father had taught them to despise. There was contempt, most foolish contempt, for all the Tringles; but, luckily, there had been no quarrelling. Then it seemed that both in Paris and in Florence Ayala had bought pretty things, from which it was to be argued that her uncle had provided her liberally with money. One pretty thing had been sent from Paris to Lucy, which could not have been bought for less than many franks. It would not be fair that Ayala should take so much without giving something in return.

Lucy knew that she too should give something in return. Though Kingsbury Crescent was not attractive, though Aunt Dosett was not to her a pleasant companion, she had begun to realise the fact that it behoved her to be grateful, if only for the food she ate, and for the bed on which she slept. As she thought of all that Ayala owed she remembered also her own debts. As the winter went on she struggled to pay them. But Aunt Dosett was a lady not much given to vacillation. She had become aware at first that Lucy had been rough to her, and she did not easily open herself to Lucy's endearments. Lucy's life at Kingsbury Crescent had begun badly, and Lucy, though she understood much about it, found it hard to turn a bad beginning to a good result.

# CHAPTER IV.
# ISADORE HAMEL

It was suggested to Lucy before she had been long in Kingsbury Crescent that she should take some exercise. For the first week she had hardly been out of the house; but this was attributed to her sorrow. Then she had accompanied her aunt for a few days during the half-hour's marketing which took place every morning, but in this there had been no sympathy. Lucy would not interest herself in the shoulder of mutton which must be of just such a weight as to last conveniently for two days, – twelve pounds, – of which, it was explained to her, more than one-half was intended for the two servants, because there was always a more lavish consumption in the kitchen than in the parlour. Lucy would not appreciate the fact that eggs at a penny a piece, whatever they might be, must be used for puddings, as eggs with even a reputation of freshness cost twopence. Aunt Dosett, beyond this, never left the house on week-days except for a few calls which were made perhaps once a month, on which occasion the Sunday gloves and the Sunday silk dress were used. On Sunday they all went to church. But this was not enough for exercise, and as Lucy was becoming pale she was recommended to take to walking in Kensington Gardens.

It is generally understood that there are raging lions about the metropolis, who would certainly eat up young ladies whole if young ladies were to walk about the streets or even about the parks by themselves. There is, however, beginning to be some vacillation as to the received belief on this subject as regards London. In large continental towns, such as Paris and Vienna, young ladies would be devoured certainly. Such, at least, is the creed. In New York and Washington there are supposed to be no lions, so that young ladies go about free as air. In London there is a rising doubt, under which before long, probably, the lions will succumb altogether. Mrs. Dosett did believe somewhat in lions, but she believed also in exercise. And she was aware that the lions eat up chiefly rich people. Young ladies who must go about without mothers, brothers, uncles, carriages, or attendants of any sort, are not often eaten or even roared at. It is the dainty darlings for whom the roarings have to be feared. Mrs. Dosett, aware that daintiness was no longer within the reach of her and hers, did assent to these walkings in Kensington Gardens. At some hour in the afternoon Lucy would walk from the house by herself, and within a quarter of an hour would find herself on the broad gravel path which leads down to the Round Pond. From thence she would go by the back of the Albert Memorial, and then across by the Serpentine and return to the same gate, never leaving Kensington Gardens. Aunt Dosett had expressed some old-fashioned idea that lions were more likely to roar in Hyde Park than within the comparatively retired purlieus of Kensington.

Now the reader must be taken back for a few moments to the bijou, as the bijou was before either the artist or his wife had died. In those days there had been a frequent concourse of people in the artist's house. Society there had not consisted chiefly of eating and drinking. Men and women would come in and out as though really for a purpose of talking. There would be three or four constantly with Dormer in his studio, helping him but little perhaps in the real furtherance of his work, though discussing art subjects in a manner calculated to keep alive art-feeling among them. A novelist or two of a morning might perhaps aid me in my general pursuit, but would, I think, interfere with the actual tally of pages. Egbert Dormer did not turn out from his hand so much work as some men that I know, but he was overflowing with art up to his ears; – and with tobacco, so that, upon the whole, the bijou was a pleasant rendezvous.

There had come there of late, quite of late, a young sculptor, named Isadore Hamel. Hamel was an Englishman, who, however, had been carried very early to Rome and had been bred there. Of his mother question never was made, but his father had been well known as an English sculptor resident at Rome. The elder Hamel had been a man of mark, who had a fine suite of rooms in the city and a villa on one of the lakes, but who never came to England. English connections were, he said, to

him abominable, by which he perhaps meant that the restrictions of decent life were not to his taste. But his busts came, and his groups in marble, and now and again some great work for some public decoration: so that money was plentiful with him, and he was a man of note. It must be acknowledged of him that he spared nothing in bringing up his son, giving him such education as might best suit his future career as an artist, and that money was always forthcoming for the lad's wants and fantasies.

Then young Hamel also became a sculptor of much promise; but early in life differed from his father on certain subjects of importance. The father was wedded to Rome and to Italy. Isadore gradually expressed an opinion that the nearer a man was to his market the better for him, that all that art could do for a man in Rome was as nothing to the position which a great artist might make for himself in London, – that, in fact, an Englishman had better be an Englishman. At twenty-six he succeeded in his attempt, and became known as a young sculptor with a workshop at Brompton. He became known to many both by his work and his acquirements; but it may not be surprising that after a year he was still unable to live, as he had been taught to live, without drawing upon his father. Then his father threw his failure in his teeth, not refusing him money indeed, but making the receipt of it unpleasant to him.

At no house had Isadore Hamel been made so welcome as at Dormer's. There was a sympathy between them both on that great question of art, whether to an artist his art should be a matter to him of more importance than all the world besides. So said Dormer, – who simply died because his wife died, who could not have touched his brush if one of his girls had been suffering, who, with all his genius, was but a faineant workman. His art more than all the world to him! No, not to him. Perhaps here and again to some enthusiast, and him hardly removed from madness! Where is the painter who shall paint a picture after his soul's longing though he shall get not a penny for it, – though he shall starve as he put his last touch to it, when he knows that by drawing some duchess of the day he shall in a fortnight earn a ducal price? Shall a wife and child be less dear to him than to a lawyer, – or to a shoemaker; or the very craving of his hunger less obdurate? A man's self, and what he has within him and his belongings, with his outlook for this and other worlds, – let that be the first, and the work, noble or otherwise, be the second. To be honest is greater than to have painted the San Sisto, or to have chiselled the Apollo; to have assisted in making others honest, – infinitely greater. All of which were discussed at great length at the bijou, and the bijouites always sided with the master of the house. To an artist, said Dormer, let his art be everything, – above wife and children, above money, above health, above even character. Then he would put out his hand with his jewelled finger, and stretch forth his velvet-clad arm, and soon after lead his friend away to the little dinner at which no luxury had been spared. But young Hamel agreed with the sermons, and not the less because Lucy Dormer had sat by and listened to them with rapt attention.

Not a word of love had been spoken to her by the sculptor when her mother died, but there had been glances and little feelings of which each was half conscious. It is so hard for a young man to speak of love, if there be real love, – so impossible that a girl should do so! Not a word had been spoken, but each had thought that the other must have known. To Lucy a word had been spoken by her mother, – "Do not think too much of him till you know," the mother had said, – not quite prudently. "Oh, no! I will think of him not at all," Lucy had replied. And she had thought of him day and night. "I wonder why Mr. Hamel is so different with you?" Ayala had said to her sister. "I am sure he is not different with me," Lucy had replied. Then Ayala had shaken her full locks and smiled.

Things came quickly after that. Mrs. Dormer had sickened and died. There was no time then for thinking of that handsome brow, of that short jet black hair, of those eyes so full of fire and thoughtfulness, of that perfect mouth, and the deep but yet soft voice. Still even in her sorrow this new god of her idolatry was not altogether forgotten. It was told to her that he had been summoned off to Rome by his father, and she wondered whether he was to find his home at Rome for ever. Then her father was ill, and in his illness Hamel came to say one word of farewell before he started.

"You find me crushed to the ground," the painter said. Something the young man whispered as to the consolation which time would bring. "Not to me," said Dormer. "It is as though one had lost his eyes. One cannot see without his eyes." It was true of him. His light had been put out.

Then, on the landing at the top of the stairs, there had been one word between Lucy and the sculptor. "I ought not to have intruded on you perhaps," he said; "but after so much kindness I could hardly go without a word."

"I am sure he will be glad that you have come."

"And you?"

"I am glad too, – so that I may say good-bye." Then she put out her hand, and he held it for a moment as he looked into her eyes. There was not a word more, but it seemed to Lucy as though there had been so many words.

Things went on quickly. Egbert Dormer died, and Lucy was taken away to Kingsbury Crescent. When once Ayala had spoken about Mr. Hamel, Lucy had silenced her. Any allusion to the idea of love wounded her, as though it was too impossible for dreams, too holy for words. How should there be words about a lover when father and mother were both dead? He had gone to his old and natural home. He had gone, and of course he would not return. To Ayala, when she came up to London early in November, to Ayala, who was going to Rome, where Isadore Hamel now was, Isadore Hamel's name was not mentioned. But through the long mornings of her life, through the long evenings, through the long nights, she still thought of him, – she could not keep herself from thinking. To a girl whose life is full of delights her lover need not be so very much, – need not, at least, be everything. Though he be a lover to be loved at all points, her friends will be something, her dancing, her horse, her theatre-going, her brothers and sisters, even her father and mother. But Lucy had nothing. The vision of Isadore Hamel had passed across her life, and had left with her the only possession that she had. It need hardly be said that she never alluded to that possession at Kingsbury Crescent. It was not a possession from which any enjoyment could come except that of thinking of it. He had passed away from her, and there was no point of life at which he could come across her again. There was no longer that half-joint studio. If it had been her lot to be as was Ayala, she then would have been taken to Rome. Then again he would have looked into her eyes and taken her hand in his. Then perhaps – . But now, even though he were to come back to London, he would know nothing of her haunts. Even in that case nothing would bring them together. As the idea was crossing her mind, – as it did cross it so frequently, – she saw him turning from the path on which she was walking, making his way towards the steps of the Memorial.

Though she saw no more than his back she was sure that it was Isadore Hamel. For a moment there was an impulse on her to run after him and to call his name. It was then early in January, and she was taking her daily walk through Kensington Gardens. She had walked there daily now for the last two months and had never spoken a word or been addressed, – had never seen a face that she had recognised. It had seemed to her that she had not an acquaintance in the world except Uncle Reg and Aunt Dosett. And now, almost within reach of her hand, was the one being in all the world whom she most longed to see. She did stand, and the word was formed within her lips; but she could not speak it. Then came the thought that she would run after him, but the thought was expelled quickly. Though she might lose him again and for ever she could not do that. She stood almost gasping till he was out of sight, and then she passed on upon her usual round.

She never omitted her walks after that, and always paused a moment as the path turned away to the Memorial. It was not that she thought that she might meet him there, – there rather than elsewhere, – but there is present to us often an idea that when some object has passed from us that we have desired then it may be seen again. Day after day, and week after week, she did not see him. During this time there came letters from Ayala, saying that their return to England was postponed till the first week in February, – that she would certainly see Lucy in February, – that she was not going to be hurried through London in half-an-hour because her aunt wished it; and that she would

do as she pleased as to visiting her sister. Then there was a word or two about Tom, – "Oh, Tom – that idiot Tom!" And another word or two about Augusta. "Augusta is worse than ever. We have not spoken to each other for the last day or two." This came but a day or two before the intended return of the Tringles.

No actual day had been fixed. But on the day before that on which Lucy thought it probable that the Tringles might return to town she was again walking in the Gardens. Having put two and two together, as people do, she felt sure that the travellers could not be away more than a day or two longer. Her mind was much intent upon Ayala, feeling that the imprudent girl was subjecting herself to great danger, knowing that it was wrong that she and Augusta should be together in the house without speaking, – thinking of her sister's perils, – when, of a sudden, Hamel was close before her! There was no question of calling to him now, – no question of an attempt to see him face to face. She had been wandering along the path with eyes fixed upon the ground, when her name was sharply called, and they two were close to each other. Hamel had a friend with him, and it seemed to Lucy at once, that she could only bow to him, only mutter something, and then pass on. How can a girl stand and speak to a gentleman in public, especially when that gentleman has a friend with him? She tried to look pleasant, bowed, smiled, muttered something, and was passing on. But he was not minded to lose her thus immediately. "Miss Dormer," he said, "I have seen your sister at Rome. May I not say a word about her?"

Why should he not say a word about Ayala? In a minute he had left his friend, and was walking back along the path with Lucy. There was not much that he had to say about Ayala. He had seen Ayala and the Tringles, and did manage to let it escape him that Lady Tringle had not been very gracious to himself when once, in public, he had claimed acquaintance with Ayala. But at that he simply smiled. Then he had asked of Lucy where she lived. "With my uncle, Mr. Dosett," said Lucy, "at Kingsbury Crescent." Then, when he asked whether he might call, Lucy, with many blushes, had said that her aunt did not receive many visitors, – that her uncle's house was different from what her father's had been.

"Shall I not see you at all, then?" he asked.

She did not like to ask him after his own purposes of life, whether he was now a resident in London, or whether he intended to return to Rome. She was covered with bashfulness, and dreaded to seem even to be interested in his affairs. "Oh, yes," she said; "perhaps we may meet some day."

"Here?" he asked.

"Oh, no; not here! It was only an accident." As she said this she determined that she must walk no more in Kensington Gardens. It would be dreadful, indeed, were he to imagine that she would consent to make an appointment with him. It immediately occurred to her that the lions were about, and that she must shut herself up.

"I have thought of you every day since I have been back," he said, "and I did not know where to hear of you. Now that we have met am I to lose you again!" Lose her! What did he mean by losing her? She, too, had found a friend, – she who had been so friendless! Would it not be dreadful to her, also, to lose him? "Is there no place where I may ask of you?"

"When Ayala is back, and they are in town, perhaps I shall sometimes be at Lady Tringle's," said Lucy, resolved that she would not tell him of her immediate abode. This was, at any rate, a certain address from where he might commence further inquiries, should he wish to make inquiry; and as such he accepted it. "I think I had better go now," said Lucy, trembling at the apparent impropriety of her present conversation.

He knew that it was intended that he should leave her, and he went. "I hope I have not offended you in coming so far."

"Oh, no." Then again she gave him her hand, and again there was the same look as he took his leave.

When she got home, which was before the dusk, having resolved that she must, at any rate, tell her aunt that she had met a friend, she found that her uncle had returned from his office. This was a most unusual occurrence. Her uncle, she knew, left Somerset House exactly at half-past four, and always took an hour and a quarter for his walk. She had never seen him in Kingsbury Crescent till a quarter before six. "I have got letters from Rome," he said, in a solemn voice.

"From Ayala?"

"One from Ayala, for you. It is here. And I have had one from my sister, also; and one, in the course of the day, from your uncle in Lombard Street. You had better read them!" There was something terribly tragic in Uncle Dosett's voice as he spoke.

And so must the reader read the letters; but they must be delayed for a few chapters.

# CHAPTER V.
# AT GLENBOGIE

We must go back to Ayala's life during the autumn and winter. She was rapidly whirled away to Glenbogie amidst the affectionate welcomings of her aunt and cousins. All manner of good things were done for her, as to presents and comforts. Young as she was, she had money given to her, which was not without attraction; and though she was, of course, in the depth of her mourning, she was made to understand that even mourning might be made becoming if no expense were spared. No expense among the Tringles ever was spared, and at first Ayala liked the bounty of profusion. But before the end of the first fortnight there grew upon her a feeling that even bank notes become tawdry if you are taught to use them as curl-papers. It may be said that nothing in the world is charming unless it be achieved at some trouble. If it rained "'64 Leoville," – which I regard as the most divine of nectars, – I feel sure that I should never raise it to my lips. Ayala did not argue the matter out in her mind, but in very early days she began to entertain a dislike to Tringle magnificence. There had been a good deal of luxury at the bijou, but always with a feeling that it ought not to be there, – that more money was being spent than prudence authorised, – which had certainly added a savour to the luxuries. A lovely bonnet, is it not more lovely because the destined wearer knows that there is some wickedness in achieving it? All the bonnets, all the claret, all the horses, seemed to come at Queen's Gate and at Glenbogie without any wickedness. There was no more question about them than as to one's ordinary bread and butter at breakfast. Sir Thomas had a way, – a merit shall we call it or a fault? – of pouring out his wealth upon the family as though it were water running in perpetuity from a mountain tarn. Ayala the romantic, Ayala the poetic, found very soon that she did not like it.

Perhaps the only pleasure left to the very rich is that of thinking of the deprivations of the poor. The bonnets, and the claret, and the horses, have lost their charm; but the Gladstone, and the old hats, and the four-wheeled cabs of their neighbours, still have a little flavour for them. From this source it seemed to Ayala that the Tringles drew much of the recreation of their lives. Sir Thomas had his way of enjoying this amusement, but it was a way that did not specially come beneath Ayala's notice. When she heard that Break-at-last, the Huddersfield manufacturer, had to sell his pictures, and that all Shoddy and Stuffgoods' grand doings for the last two years had only been a flash in the pan, she did not understand enough about it to feel wounded; but when she heard her aunt say that people like the Poodles had better not have a place in Scotland than have to let it, and when Augusta hinted that Lady Sophia Smallware had pawned her diamonds, then she felt that her nearest and dearest relatives smelt abominably of money.

Of all the family Sir Thomas was most persistently the kindest to her, though he was a man who did not look to be kind. She was pretty, and though he was ugly himself he liked to look at things pretty. He was, too, perhaps, a little tired of his own wife and daughters, – who were indeed what he had made them, but still were not quite to his taste. In a general way he gave instructions that Ayala should be treated exactly as a daughter, and he informed his wife that he intended to add a codicil to his will on her behalf. "Is that necessary?" asked Lady Tringle, who began to feel something like natural jealousy. "I suppose I ought to do something for a girl if I take her by the hand," said Sir Thomas, roughly. "If she gets a husband I will give her something, and that will do as well." Nothing more was said about it, but when Sir Thomas went up to town the codicil was added to his will.

Ayala was foolish rather than ungrateful, not understanding the nature of the family to which she was relegated. Before she had been taken away she had promised Lucy that she would be "obedient" to her aunt. There had hardly been such a word as obedience known at the bijou. If any were obedient, it was the mother and the father to the daughters. Lucy, and Ayala as well, had understood something of this; and therefore Ayala had promised to be obedient to her aunt. "And to Uncle Thomas," Lucy had demanded, with an imploring embrace. "Oh, yes," said Ayala, dreading her uncle at that time.

She soon learned that no obedience whatsoever was exacted from Sir Thomas. She had to kiss him morning and evening, and then to take whatever presents he made her. An easy uncle he was to deal with, and she almost learned to love him. Nor was Aunt Emmeline very exigeant, though she was fantastic and sometimes disagreeable. But Augusta was the great difficulty. Lucy had not told her to obey Augusta, and Augusta she would not obey. Now Augusta demanded obedience.

"You never ordered me," Ayala had said to Lucy when they met in London as the Tringles were passing through. At the bijou there had been a republic, in which all the inhabitants and all the visitors had been free and equal. Such republicanism had been the very mainspring of life at the bijou. Ayala loved equality, and she specially felt that it should exist among sisters. Do anything for Lucy? Oh, yes, indeed, anything; abandon anything; but for Lucy as a sister among sisters, not for an elder as from a younger! And if she were not bound to serve Lucy then certainly not Augusta. But Augusta liked to be served. On one occasion she sent Ayala upstairs, and on another she sent Ayala down-stairs. Ayala went, but determined to be equal with her cousin. On the morning following, in the presence of Aunt Emmeline and of Gertrude, in the presence also of two other ladies who were visiting at the house, she asked Augusta if she would mind running upstairs and fetching her scrap-book! She had been thinking about it all the night and all the morning, plucking up her courage. But she had been determined. She found a great difficulty in saying the words, but she said them. The thing was so preposterous that all the ladies in the room looked aghast at the proposition. "I really think that Augusta has got something else to do," said Aunt Emmeline. "Oh, very well," said Ayala, and then they were all silent. Augusta, who was employed on a silk purse, sat still and did not say a word.

Had a great secret, or rather a great piece of news which pervaded the family, been previously communicated to Ayala, she would not probably have made so insane a suggestion. Augusta was engaged to be married to the Honourable Septimus Traffick, the member for Port Glasgow. A young lady who is already half a bride is not supposed to run up and down stairs as readily as a mere girl. For running up and down stairs at the bijou Ayala had been proverbial. They were a family who ran up and down with the greatest alacrity. "Oh, papa, my basket is out on the seat" – for there had been a seat in the two-foot garden behind the house. Papa would go down in two jumps and come up with three skips, and there was the basket, only because his girl liked him to do something for her. But for him Ayala would run about as though she were a tricksy Ariel. Had the important matrimonial news been conveyed to Ariel, with a true girl's spirit she would have felt that during the present period Augusta was entitled to special exemption from all ordering. Had she herself been engaged she would have run more and quicker than ever, – would have been excited thereto by the peculiar vitality of her new prospects; but to even Augusta she would be subservient, because of her appreciation of bridal importance. She, however, had not been told till that afternoon.

"You should not have asked Augusta to go up stairs," said Aunt Emmeline, in a tone of mitigated reproach.

"Oh! I didn't know," said Ayala.

"You had meant to say that because she had sent you you were to send her. There is a difference, you know."

"I didn't know," said Ayala, beginning to think that she would fight her battle if told of such differences as she believed to exist.

"I had meant to tell you before, but I may as well tell you now, Augusta is engaged to be married to the Honourable Mr. Septimus Traffick. He is second son of Lord Boardotrade, and is in the House."

"Dear me!" said Ayala, acknowledging at once within her heart that the difference alleged was one against which she need not rouse herself to the fight. Aunt Emmeline had, in truth, intended to insist on that difference – and another; but her courage had failed her.

"Yes, indeed. He is a man very much thought of just now in public life, and Augusta's mind is naturally much occupied. He writes all those letters in The Times about supply and demand."

"Does he, aunt?" Ayala did feel that if Augusta's mind was entirely occupied with supply and demand she ought not to be made to go upstairs to fetch a scrap-book. But she had her doubts about Augusta's mind. Nevertheless, if the forthcoming husband were true, that might be a reason. "If anybody had told me before I wouldn't have asked her," she said.

Then Lady Tringle explained that it had been thought better not to say anything heretofore as to the coming matrimonial hilarities because of the sadness which had fallen upon the Dormer family. Ayala accepted this as an excuse, and nothing further was said as to the iniquity of her request to her cousin. But there was a general feeling among the women that Ayala, in lieu of gratitude, had exhibited an intention of rebelling.

On the next day Mr. Traffick arrived, whose coming had probably made it necessary that the news should be told. Ayala was never so surprised in her life as when she saw him. She had never yet had a lover of her own, had never dreamed of a lover, but she had her own idea as to what a lover ought to be. She had thought that Isadore Hamel would be a very nice lover – for her sister. Hamel was young, handsome, with a great deal to say on such a general subject as art, but too bashful to talk easily to the girl he admired. Ayala had thought that all that was just as it should be. She was altogether resolved that Hamel and her sister should be lovers, and was determined to be devoted to her future brother-in-law. But the Honourable Septimus Traffick! It was a question to her whether her Uncle Tringle would not have been better as a lover.

And yet there was nothing amiss about Mr. Traffick. He was very much like an ordinary hard-working member of the House of Commons, over perhaps rather than under forty years of age. He was somewhat bald, somewhat grey, somewhat fat, and had lost that look of rosy plumpness which is seldom, I fear, compatible with hard work and late hours. He was not particularly ugly, nor was he absurd in appearance. But he looked to be a disciple of business, not of pleasure, nor of art. "To sit out on the bank of a stream and have him beside one would not be particularly nice," thought Ayala to herself. Mr. Traffick no doubt would have enjoyed it very well if he could have spared the time; but to Ayala it seemed that such a man as that could have cared nothing for love. As soon as she saw him, and realised in her mind the fact that Augusta was to become his wife, she felt at once the absurdity of sending Augusta on a message.

Augusta that evening was somewhat more than ordinarily kind to her cousin. Now that the great secret was told, her cousin no doubt would recognise her importance. "I suppose you had not heard of him before?" she said to Ayala.

"I never did."

"That's because you have not attended to the debates."

"I never have. What are debates?"

"Mr. Traffick is very much thought of in the House of Commons on all subjects affecting commerce."

"Oh!"

"It is the most glorious study which the world affords."

"The House of Commons. I don't think it can be equal to art."

Then Augusta turned up her nose with a double turn, – first as against painters, Mr. Dormer having been no more, and then at Ayala's ignorance in supposing that the House of Commons could have been spoken of as a study. "Mr. Traffick will probably be in the government some day," she said.

"Has not he been yet?" asked Ayala.

"Not yet."

"Then won't he be very old before he gets there?" This was a terrible question. Young ladies of five-and-twenty, when they marry gentlemen of four-and-fifty, make up their minds for well-understood and well-recognised old age. They see that they had best declare their purpose, and they do declare it. "Of course, Mr. Walker is old enough to be my father, but I have made up my mind that I like that better than anything else." Then the wall has been jumped, and the thing can go smoothly.

But at forty-five there is supposed to be so much of youth left that the difference of age may possibly be tided over and not made to appear abnormal. Augusta Tringle had determined to tide it over in this way. The forty-five had been gradually reduced to "less than forty," – though all the Peerages were there to give the lie to the assertion. She talked of her lover as Septimus, and was quite prepared to sit with him beside a stream if only half-an-hour for the amusement could be found. When, therefore, Ayala suggested that if her lover wanted to get into office he had better do so quickly, lest he should be too old, Augusta was not well pleased.

"Lord Boardotrade was much older when he began," said Augusta. "His friends, indeed, tell Septimus that he should not push himself forward too quickly. But I don't think that I ever came across any one who was so ignorant of such things as you are, Ayala."

"Perhaps he is not so old as he looks," said Ayala. After this it may be imagined that there was not close friendship between the cousins. Augusta's mind was filled with a strong conception as to Ayala's ingratitude. The houseless, penniless orphan had been taken in, and had done nothing but make herself disagreeable. Young! No doubt she was young. But had she been as old as Methuselah she could not have been more insolent. It did not, however, matter to her, Augusta. She was going away; but it would be terrible to her mamma and to Gertrude! Thus it was that Augusta spoke of her cousin to her mother.

And then there came another trouble, which was more troublesome to Ayala even than the other. Tom Tringle, who was in the house in Lombard Street, who was the only son, and heir to the title and no doubt to much of the wealth, had chosen to take Ayala's part and to enlist himself as her special friend. Ayala had, at first, accepted him as a cousin, and had consented to fraternise with him. Then, on some unfortunate day, there had been some word or look which she had failed not to understand, and immediately she had become afraid of Tom. Tom was not like Isadore Hamel, – was very far, indeed, from that idea of a perfect lover which Ayala's mind had conceived; but he was by no means a lout, or an oaf, or an idiot, as Ayala in her letters to her sister had described him. He had been first at Eton and then at Oxford, and having spent a great deal of money recklessly, and done but little towards his education, had been withdrawn and put into the office. His father declared of him now that he would do fairly well in the world. He had a taste for dress, and kept four or five hunters which he got but little credit by riding. He made a fuss about his shooting, but did not shoot much. He was stout and awkward looking, – very like his father, but without that settled air which age gives to heavy men. In appearance he was not the sort of lover to satisfy the preconceptions of such a girl as Ayala. But he was good-natured and true. At last he became to her terribly true. His love, such as it seemed at first, was absurd to her. "If you make yourself such a fool, Tom, I'll never speak to you again," she had said, once. Even after that she had not understood that it was more than a stupid joke. But the joke, while it was considered as such, was very distasteful to her; and afterwards, when a certain earnestness in it was driven in upon her, it became worse than distasteful.

She repudiated his love with such power as she had, but she could not silence him. She could not at all understand that a young man, who seemed to her to be an oaf, should really be in love, – honestly in love with her. But such was the case. Then she became afraid lest others should see it, – afraid, though she often told herself that she would appeal to her aunt for protection. "I tell you I don't care a bit about you, and you oughtn't to go on," she said. But he did go on, and though her aunt did not see it Augusta did.

Then Augusta spoke a word to her in scorn. "Ayala," she said, "you should not encourage Tom."

Encourage him! What a word from one girl to another! What a world of wrong there was in the idea which had created the word! What an absence of the sort of feeling which, according to Ayala's theory of life, there should be on such a matter between two sisters, two cousins, or two friends! Encourage him! When Augusta ought to have been the first to assist her in her trouble! "Oh, Augusta," she said, turning sharply round, "what a spiteful creature you are."

"I suppose you think so, because I do not choose to approve."

"Approve of what! Tom is thoroughly disagreeable. Sometimes he makes my life such a burden to me that I think I shall have to go to my aunt. But you are worse. Oh!" exclaimed Ayala, shuddering as she thought of the unwomanly treachery of which her cousin was guilty towards her.

Nothing more came of it at Glenbogie. Tom was required in Lombard Street, and the matter was not suspected by Aunt Emmeline, – as far, at least, as Ayala was aware. When he was gone it was to her as though there would be a world of time before she would see him again. They were to go to Rome, and he would not be at Rome till January. Before that he might have forgotten his folly. But Ayala was quite determined that she would never forget the ill offices of Augusta. She did hate Augusta, as she had told her sister. Then, in this frame of mind, the family was taken to Rome.

# CHAPTER VI.
# AT ROME

During her journeying and during her sojourn at Rome Ayala did enjoy much; but even these joys did not come to her without causing some trouble of spirit. At Glenbogie everybody had known that she was a dependent niece, and that as such she was in truth nobody. On that morning when she had ordered Augusta to go upstairs the two visitors had stared with amazement, – who would not have stared at all had they heard Ayala ordered in the same way. But it came about that in Rome Ayala was almost of more importance than the Tringles. It was absolutely true that Lady Tringle and Augusta and Gertrude were asked here and there because of Ayala; and the worst of it was that the fact was at last suspected by the Tringles themselves. Sometimes they would not always be asked. One of the Tringle girls would only be named. But Ayala was never forgotten. Once or twice an effort was made by some grand lady, whose taste was perhaps more conspicuous than her good-nature, to get Ayala without burdening herself with any of the Tringles. When this became clear to the mind of Augusta, – of Augusta, engaged as she was to the Honourable Septimus Traffick, Member of Parliament, – Augusta's feelings were – such as may better be understood than described! "Don't let her go, mamma," she said to Lady Tringle one morning.

"But the Marchesa has made such a point of it."

"Bother the Marchesa! Who is the Marchesa? I believe it is all Ayala's doing because she expects to meet that Mr. Hamel. It is dreadful to see the way she goes on."

"Mr. Hamel was a very intimate friend of her father's."

"I don't believe a bit of it."

"He certainly used to be at his house. I remember seeing him."

"I daresay; but that doesn't justify Ayala in running after him as she does. I believe that all this about the Marchesa is because of Mr. Hamel." This was better than believing that Ayala was to be asked to sing, and that Ayala was to be fêted and admired and danced with, simply because Ayala was Ayala, and that they, the Tringles, in spite of Glenbogie, Merle Park, and Queen's Gate, were not wanted at all. But when Aunt Emmeline signified to Ayala that on that particular morning she had better not go to the Marchesa's picnic, Ayala simply said that she had promised; – and Ayala went.

At this time no gentleman of the family was with them. Sir Thomas had gone, and Tom Tringle had not come. Then, just at Christmas, the Honourable Septimus Traffick came for a short visit, – a very short visit, no more than four or five days, because Supply and Demand were requiring all his services in preparation for the coming Session of Parliament. But for five halcyon days he was prepared to devote himself to the glories of Rome under the guidance of Augusta. He did not of course sleep at the Palazzo Ruperti, where it delighted Lady Tringle to inform her friends in Rome that she had a suite of apartments "au première," but he ate there and drank there and almost lived there; so that it became absolutely necessary to inform the world of Rome that it was Augusta's destiny to become in course of time the Honourable Mrs. Traffick, otherwise the close intimacy would hardly have been discreet, – unless it had been thought, as the ill-natured Marchesa had hinted, that Mr. Traffick was Lady Tringle's elder brother. Augusta, however, was by no means ashamed of her lover. Perhaps she felt that when it was known that she was about to be the bride of so great a man then doors would be open for her at any rate as wide as for her cousin. At this moment she was very important to herself. She was about to convey no less a sum than £120,000 to Mr. Traffick, who, in truth, as younger son of Lord Boardotrade, was himself not well endowed. Considering her own position and her future husband's rank and standing, she did not know how a young woman could well be more important. She was very important at any rate to Mr. Traffick. She was sure of that. When, therefore, she learned that Ayala had been asked to a grand ball at the Marchesa's, that Mr. Traffick was also to be among the guests, and that none of the Tringles had been invited, – then her anger became hot.

She must have been very stupid when she took it into her head to be jealous of Mr. Traffick's attention to her cousin; stupid, at any rate, when she thought that her cousin was laying out feminine lures for Mr. Traffick. Poor Ayala! We shall see much of her in these pages, and it may be well to declare of her at once that her ideas at this moment about men, – or rather about a possible man, – were confined altogether to the abstract. She had floating in her young mind some fancies as to the beauty of love. That there should be a hero must of course be necessary. But in her day-dreams this hero was almost celestial, – or, at least, æthereal. It was a concentration of poetic perfection to which there was not as yet any appanage of apparel, of features, or of wealth. It was a something out of heaven which should think it well to spend his whole time in adoring her and making her more blessed than had ever yet been a woman upon the earth. Then her first approach to a mundane feeling had been her acknowledgment to herself that Isadore Hamel would do as a lover for Lucy. Isadore Hamel was certainly very handsome, – was possessed of infinite good gifts; but even he would by no means have come up to her requirements for her own hero. That hero must have wings tinged with azure, whereas Hamel had a not much more ætherealised than ordinary coat and waistcoat. She knew that heroes with azure wings were not existent save in the imagination, and, as she desired a real lover for Lucy, Hamel would do. But for herself her imagination was too valuable then to allow her to put her foot upon earth. Such as she was, must not Augusta have been very stupid to have thought that Ayala should become fond of her Mr. Traffick!

Her cousin Tom had come to her, and had been to her as a Newfoundland dog is when he jumps all over you just when he has come out of a horsepond. She would have liked Tom had he kept his dog-like gambols at a proper distance. But when he would cover her with muddy water he was abominable. But this Augusta had not understood. With Mr. Traffick there would be no dog-like gambols; and, as he was not harsh to her, Ayala liked him. She had liked her uncle. Such men were, to her thinking, more like dogs than lovers. She sang when Mr. Traffick asked her, and made a picture for him, and went with him to the Coliseum, and laughed at him about Supply and Demand. She was very pretty, and perhaps Mr. Traffick did like to look at her.

"I really think you were too free with Mr. Traffick last night," Augusta said to her one morning.

"Free! How free?"

"You were – laughing at him."

"Oh, he likes that," said Ayala. "All that time we were up at the top of St. Peter's I was quizzing him about his speeches. He lets me say just what I please."

This was wormwood. In the first place there had been a word or two between the lovers about that going up of St. Peter's, and Augusta had refused to join them. She had wished Septimus to remain down with her, – which would have been tantamount to preventing any of the party from going up; but Septimus had persisted on ascending. Then Augusta had been left for a long hour alone with her mother. Gertrude had no doubt gone up, but Gertrude had lagged during the ascent. Ayala had skipped up the interminable stairs and Mr. Traffick had trotted after her with admiring breathless industry. This itself, with the thoughts of the good time which Septimus might be having at the top, was very bad. But now to be told that she, Ayala, should laugh at him; and that he, Septimus, should like it! "I suppose he takes you to be a child," said Augusta; "but if you are a child you ought to conduct yourself."

"I suppose he does perceive the difference," said Ayala.

She had not in the least known what the words might convey, – had probably meant nothing. But to Augusta it was apparent that Ayala had declared that her lover, her Septimus, had preferred her extreme youth to the more mature charms of his own true love, – or had, perhaps, preferred Ayala's raillery to Augusta's serious demeanour. "You are the most impertinent person I ever knew in my life," said Augusta, rising from her chair and walking slowly out of the room. Ayala stared after her, not above half comprehending the cause of the anger.

Then came the very serious affair of the ball. The Marchesa had asked that her dear little friend Ayala Dormer might be allowed to come over to a little dance which her own girls were going to have. Her own girls were so fond of Ayala! There would be no trouble. There was a carriage which would be going somewhere else, and she would be fetched and taken home. Ayala at once declared that she intended to go, and her Aunt Emmeline did not refuse her sanction. Augusta was shocked, declaring that the little dance was to be one of the great balls of the season, and pronouncing the whole to be a falsehood; but the affair was arranged before she could stop it.

But Mr. Traffick's affair in the matter came more within her range. "Septimus," she said, "I would rather you would not go to that woman's party." Septimus had been asked only on the day before the party, – as soon, indeed, as his arrival had become known to the Marchesa.

"Why, my own one?"

"She has not treated mamma well, – nor yet me."

"Ayala is going." He had no right to call her Ayala. So Augusta thought.

"My cousin is behaving badly in the matter, and mamma ought not to allow her to go. Who knows anything about the Marchesa Baldoni?"

"Both he and she are of the very best families in Rome," said Mr. Traffick, who knew everything about it.

"At any rate they are behaving very badly to us, and I will take it as a favour that you do not go. Asking Ayala, and then asking you, as good as from the same house, is too marked. You ought not to go."

Perhaps Mr. Traffick had on some former occasion felt some little interference with his freedom of action. Perhaps he liked the acquaintance of the Marchesa. Perhaps he liked Ayala Dormer. Be that as it might, he would not yield. "Dear Augusta, it is right that I should go there, if it be only for half-an-hour." This he said in a tone of voice with which Augusta was already acquainted, which she did not love, and which, when she heard it, would make her think of her £120,000. When he had spoken he left her, and she began to think of her £120,000.

They both went, Ayala and Mr. Traffick, – and Mr. Traffick, instead of staying half-an-hour, brought Ayala back at three o'clock in the morning. Though Mr. Traffick was nearly as old as Uncle Tringle, yet he could dance. Ayala had been astonished to find how well he could dance, and thought that she might please her cousin Augusta by praising the juvenility of her lover at luncheon the next day. She had not appeared at breakfast, but had been full of the ball at lunch. "Oh, dear, yes, I dare say there were two hundred people there."

"That is what she calls a little dance," said Augusta, with scorn.

"I suppose that is the Italian way of talking about it," said Ayala.

"Italian way! I hate Italian ways."

"Mr. Traffick liked it very much. I'm sure he'll tell you so. I had no idea he would care to dance."

Augusta only shook herself and turned up her nose. Lady Tringle thought it necessary to say something in defence of her daughter's choice. "Why should not Mr. Traffick dance like any other gentleman?"

"Oh, I don't know. I thought that a man who makes so many speeches in Parliament would think of something else. I was very glad he did, for he danced three times with me. He can waltz as lightly as – " As though he were young, she was going to say, but then she stopped herself.

"He is the best dancer I ever danced with," said Augusta.

"But you almost never do dance," said Ayala.

"I suppose I may know about it as well as another," said Augusta, angrily.

The next day was the last of Mr. Traffick's sojourn in Rome, and on that day he and Augusta so quarrelled that, for a certain number of hours, it was almost supposed in the family that the match would be broken off. On the afternoon of the day after the dance Mr. Traffick was walking with Ayala on the Pincian, while Augusta was absolutely remaining behind with her mother. For a quarter-

of-an-hour, – the whole day, as it seemed to Augusta, – there was a full two hundred yards between them. It was not that the engaged girl could not bear the severance, but that she could not endure the attention paid to Ayala. On the next morning "she had it out," as some people say, with her lover. "If I am to be treated in this way you had better tell me so at once," she said.

"I know no better way of treating you," said Mr. Traffick.

"Dancing with that chit all night, turning her head, and then walking with her all the next day! I will not put up with such conduct."

Mr. Traffick valued £120,000 very highly, as do most men, and would have done much to keep it; but he believed that the best way of making sure of it would be by showing himself to be the master. "My own one," he said, "you are really making an ass of yourself."

"Very well! Then I will write to papa, and let him know that it must be all over."

For three hours there was terrible trouble in the apartments in the Palazzo Ruperti, during which Mr. Traffick was enjoying himself by walking up and down the Forum, and calculating how many Romans could have congregated themselves in the space which is supposed to have seen so much of the world's doings. During this time Augusta was very frequently in hysterics; but, whether in hysterics or out of them, she would not allow Ayala to come near her. She gave it to be understood that Ayala had interfered fatally, foully, damnably, with all her happiness. She demanded, from fit to fit, that telegrams should be sent over to bring her father to Italy for her protection. She would rave about Septimus, and then swear that, under no consideration whatever, would she ever see him again. At the end of three hours she was told that Septimus was in the drawing-room. Lady Tringle had sent half-a-dozen messengers after him, and at last he was found looking up at the Arch of Titus. "Bid him go," said Augusta. "I never want to behold him again." But within two minutes she was in his arms, and before dinner she was able to take a stroll with him on the Pincian.

He left, like a thriving lover, high in the good graces of his beloved; but the anger which had fallen on Ayala had not been removed. Then came a rumour that the Marchesa, who was half English, had called Ayala Cinderella, and the name had added fuel to the fire of Augusta's wrath. There was much said about it between Lady Tringle and her daughter, the aunt really feeling that more blame was being attributed to Ayala than she deserved. "Perhaps she gives herself airs," said Lady Tringle, "but really it is no more."

"She is a viper," said Augusta.

Gertrude rather took Ayala's part, telling her mother, in private, that the accusation about Mr. Traffick was absurd. "The truth is," said Gertrude, "that Ayala thinks herself very clever and very beautiful, and Augusta will not stand it." Gertrude acknowledged that Ayala was upsetting and ungrateful. Poor Lady Tringle, in her husband's absence, did not know what to do about her niece.

Altogether, they were uncomfortable after Mr. Traffick went and before Tom Tringle had come. On no consideration whatsoever would Augusta speak to her cousin. She declared that Ayala was a viper, and would give no other reason. In all such quarrelings the matter most distressing is that the evil cannot be hidden. Everybody at Rome who knew the Tringles, or who knew Ayala, was aware that Augusta Tringle would not speak to her cousin. When Ayala was asked she would shake her locks, and open her eyes, and declare that she knew nothing about it. In truth she knew very little about it. She remembered that passage-at-arms about the going upstairs at Glenbogie, but she could hardly understand that for so small an affront, and one so distant, Augusta would now refuse to speak to her. That Augusta had always been angry with her, and since Mr. Traffick's arrival more angry than ever, she had felt; but that Augusta was jealous in respect to her lover had never yet at all come home to Ayala. That she should have wanted to captivate Mr. Traffick, – she with her high ideas of some transcendental, more than human, hero!

But she had to put up with it, and to think of it. She had sense enough to know that she was no more than a stranger in her aunt's family, and that she must go if she made herself unpleasant to them. She was aware that hitherto she had not succeeded with her residence among them. Perhaps she might

have to go. Some things she would bear, and in them she would endeavour to amend her conduct. In other matters she would hold her own, and go, if necessary. Though her young imagination was still full of her unsubstantial hero, – though she still had her castles in the air altogether incapable of terrestrial foundation, – still there was a common sense about her which told her that she must give and take. She would endeavour to submit herself to her aunt. She would be kind, – as she had always been kind, – to Gertrude. She would in all matters obey her uncle. Her misfortune with the Newfoundland dog had almost dwindled out of her mind. To Augusta she could not submit herself. But then Augusta, as soon as the next session of Parliament should be over, would be married out of the way. And, on her own part, she did think that her aunt was inclined to take her part in the quarrel with Augusta.

Thus matters were going on in Rome when there came up another and a worse cause for trouble.

# CHAPTER VII.
# TOM TRINGLE IN EARNEST

Tom Tringle, though he had first appeared to his cousin Ayala as a Newfoundland dog which might perhaps be pleasantly playful, and then, as the same dog, very unpleasant because dripping with muddy water, was nevertheless a young man with so much manly truth about him as to be very much in love. He did not look like it; but then perhaps the young men who do fall most absolutely into love do not look like it. To Ayala her cousin Tom was as unloveable as Mr. Septimus Traffick. She could like them both well enough while they would be kind to her. But as to regarding cousin Tom as a lover, – the idea was so preposterous to her that she could not imagine that any one else should look upon it as real. But with Tom the idea had been real, and was, moreover, permanent. The black locks which would be shaken here and there, the bright glancing eyes which could be so joyous and could be so indignant, the colour of her face which had nothing in it of pink, which was brown rather, but over which the tell-tale blood would rush with a quickness which was marvellous to him, the lithe quick figure which had in it nothing of the weight of earth, the little foot which in itself was a perfect joy, the step with all the elasticity of a fawn, – these charms together had mastered him. Tom was not romantic or poetic, but the romance and poetry of Ayala had been divine to him. It is not always like to like in love. Titania loved the weaver Bottom with the ass's head. Bluebeard, though a bad husband, is supposed to have been fond of his last wife. The Beauty has always been beloved by the Beast. To Ayala the thing was monstrous; – but it was natural. Tom Tringle was determined to have his way, and when he started for Rome was more intent upon his love-making than all the glories of the Capitol and the Vatican.

When he first made his appearance before Ayala's eyes he was bedecked in a manner that was awful to her. Down at Glenbogie he had affected a rough attire, as is the custom with young men of ample means when fishing, shooting, or the like, is supposed to be the employment then in hand. The roughness had been a little overdone, but it had added nothing to his own uncouthness. In London he was apt to run a little towards ornamental gilding, but in London his tastes had been tempered by the ill-natured criticism of the world at large. He had hardly dared at Queen's Gate to wear his biggest pins; but he had taken upon himself to think that at Rome an Englishman might expose himself with all his jewelry. "Oh, Tom, I never saw anything so stunning," his sister Gertrude said to him. He had simply frowned upon her, and had turned himself to Ayala, as though Ayala, being an artist, would be able to appreciate something beautiful in art. Ayala had looked at him and had marvelled, and had ventured to hope that, with his Glenbogie dress, his Glenbogie manners and Glenbogie propensities would be changed.

At this time the family at Rome was very uncomfortable. Augusta would not speak to her cousin, and had declared to her mother and sister her determination never to speak to Ayala again. For a time Aunt Emmeline had almost taken her niece's part, feeling that she might best bring things back to a condition of peace in this manner. Ayala, she had thought, might thus be decoyed into a state of submission. Ayala, so instigated, had made her attempt. "What is the matter, Augusta," she had said, "that you are determined to quarrel with me?" Then had followed a little offer that bygones should be bygones.

"I have quarrelled with you," said Augusta, "because you do not know how to behave yourself." Then Ayala had flashed forth, and the little attempt led to a worse condition than ever, and words were spoken which even Aunt Emmeline had felt to be irrevocable, irremediable.

"Only that you are going away I would not consent to live here," said Ayala. Then Aunt Emmeline had asked her where she would go to live should it please her to remove herself. Ayala had thought of this for a moment, and then had burst into tears. "If I could not live I could die. Anything

would be better than to be treated as she treats me." So the matters were when Tom came to Rome with all his jewelry.

Lady Tringle had already told herself that, in choosing Ayala, she had chosen wrong. Lucy, though not so attractive as Ayala, was pretty, quiet, and ladylike. So she thought now. And as to Ayala's attractions, they were not at all of a nature to be serviceable to such a family as hers. To have her own girls outshone, to be made to feel that the poor orphan was the one person most worthy of note among them, to be subjected to the caprices of a pretty, proud, ill-conditioned minx; – thus it was that Aunt Emmeline was taught to regard her own charity and good-nature towards her niece. There was, she said, no gratitude in Ayala. Had she said that there was no humility she would have been more nearly right. She was entitled, she thought, to expect both gratitude and humility, and she was sorry that she had opened the Paradise of her opulent home to one so little grateful and so little humble as Ayala. She saw now her want of judgment in that she had not taken Lucy.

Tom, who was not a fool, in spite of his trinkets, saw the state of the case, and took Ayala's part at once. "I think you are quite right," he said to her, on the first occasion on which he had contrived to find himself alone with her after his arrival.

"Right about what?"

"In not giving up to Augusta. She was always like that when she was a child, and now her head is turned about Traffick."

"I shouldn't grudge her her lover if she would only let me alone."

"I don't suppose she hurts you much?"

"She sets my aunt against me, and that makes me unhappy. Of course I am wretched."

"Oh, Ayala, don't be wretched."

"How is one to help it? I never said an ill-natured word to her, and now I am so lonely among them!" In saying this, – in seeking to get one word of sympathy from her cousin, she forgot for a moment his disagreeable pretensions. But, no sooner had she spoken of her loneliness, than she saw that ogle in his eye of which she had spoken with so much ludicrous awe in her letters from Glenbogie to her sister.

"I shall always take your part," said he.

"I don't want any taking of parts."

"But I shall. I am not going to see you put upon. You are more to me, Ayala, than any of them." Then he looked at her, whereupon she got up and ran away.

But she could not always run away, nor could she always refuse when he asked her to go with him about the show-places of the city. To avoid starting alone with him was within her power; but she found herself compelled to join herself to Gertrude and her brother in some of those little excursions which were taken for her benefit. At this time there had come to be a direct quarrel between Lady Tringle and the Marchesa, which, however, had arisen altogether on the part of Augusta. Augusta had forced her mother to declare that she was insulted, and then there was no more visiting between them. This had been sad enough for Ayala, who had struck up an intimacy with the Marchesa's daughters. But the Marchesa had explained to her that there was no help for it. "It won't do for you to separate yourself from your aunt," she had said. "Of course we shall be friends, and at some future time you shall come and see us." So there had been a division, and Ayala would have been quite alone had she declined the proffered companionship of Gertrude.

Within the walls and arches and upraised terraces of the Coliseum they were joined one day by young Hamel, the sculptor, who had not, as yet, gone back to London, – and had not, as yet, met Lucy in the gardens at Kensington; and with him there had been one Frank Houston, who had made acquaintance with Lady Tringle, and with the Tringles generally, since they had been at Rome. Frank Houston was a young man of family, with a taste for art, very good-looking, but not specially well off in regard to income. He had heard of the good fortune of Septimus Traffick in having prepared for himself a connection with so wealthy a family as the Tringles, and had thought it possible that a

settlement in life might be comfortable for himself. What few soft words he had hitherto been able to say to Gertrude had been taken in good part, and when, therefore, they met among the walls of the Coliseum, she had naturally straggled away to see some special wonder which he had a special aptitude for showing. Hamel remained with Ayala and Tom, talking of the old days at the bijou, till he found himself obliged to leave them. Then Tom had his opportunity.

"Ayala," he said, "all this must be altered."

"What must be altered?"

"If you only knew, Ayala, how much you are to me."

"I wish you wouldn't, Tom. I don't want to be anything to anybody in particular."

"What I mean is, that I won't have them sit upon you. They treat you as – as, – well, as though you had only half a right to be one of them."

"No more I have. I have no right at all."

"But that's not the way I want it to be. If you were my wife – "

"Tom, pray don't."

"Why not? I'm in earnest. Why ain't I to speak as I think? Oh, Ayala, if you knew how much I think of you."

"But you shouldn't. You haven't got a right."

"I have got a right."

"But I don't want it, Tom, and I won't have it." He had carried her away now to the end of the terrace, or ruined tier of seats, on which they were walking, and had got her so hemmed into a corner that she could not get away from him. She was afraid of him, lest he should put out his hand to take hold of her, – lest something even more might be attempted. And yet his manner was manly and sincere, and had it not been for his pins and his chains she could not but have acknowledged his goodness to her, much as she might have disliked his person. "I want to get out," she said. "I won't stay here any more." Mr. Traffick, on the top of St. Peter's, had been a much pleasanter companion.

"Don't you believe me when I tell you that I love you better than anybody?" pleaded Tom.

"No."

"Not believe me? Oh, Ayala!"

"I don't want to believe anything. I want to get out. If you go on, I'll tell my aunt."

Tell her aunt! There was a want of personal consideration to himself in this way of receiving his addresses which almost angered him. Tom Tringle was not in the least afraid of his mother, – was not even afraid of his father as long as he was fairly regular at the office in Lombard Street. He was quite determined to please himself in marriage, and was disposed to think that his father and mother would like him to be settled. Money was no object. There was, to his thinking, no good reason why he should not marry his cousin. For her the match was so excellent that he hardly expected she would reject him when she could be made to understand that he was really in earnest. "You may tell all the world," he said proudly. "All I want is that you should love me."

"But I don't. There are Gertrude and Mr. Houston, and I want to go to them."

"Say one nice word to me, Ayala."

"I don't know how to say a nice word. Can't you be made to understand that I don't like it?"

"Ayala."

"Why don't you let me go away?"

"Ayala, – give me – one – kiss." Then Ayala did go away, escaping by some kid-like manœuvre among the ruins, and running quickly, while he followed her, joined herself to the other pair of lovers, who probably were less in want of her society than she of theirs. "Ayala, I am quite in earnest," said Tom, as they were walking home, "and I mean to go on with it."

Ayala thought that there was nothing for it but to tell her aunt. That there would be some absurdity in such a proceeding she did feel, – that she would be acting as though her cousin were a naughty boy who was merely teasing her. But she felt also the peculiar danger of her own position.

Her aunt must be made to understand that she, Ayala, was innocent in the matter. It would be terrible to her to be suspected even for a moment of a desire to inveigle the heir. That Augusta would bring such an accusation against her she thought probable. Augusta had said as much even at Glenbogie. She must therefore be on the alert, and let it be understood at once that she was not leagued with her cousin Tom. There would be an absurdity; – but that would be better than suspicion.

She thought about it all that afternoon, and in the evening she came to a resolution. She would write a letter to her cousin and persuade him if possible to desist. If he should again annoy her after that she would appeal to her aunt. Then she wrote and sent her letter, which was as follows; —

> Dear Tom,
>
> You don't know how unhappy you made me at the Coliseum to-day. I don't think you ought to turn against me when you know what I have to bear. It is turning against me to talk as you did. Of course it means nothing; but you shouldn't do it. It never never could mean anything. I hope you will be good-natured and kind to me, and then I shall be so much obliged to you. If you won't say anything more like that I will forget it altogether.
>
> *Your affectionate cousin,*
> *Ayala.*

The letter ought to have convinced him. Those two underscored nevers should have eradicated from his mind the feeling which had been previously produced by the assertion that he had "meant nothing." But he was so assured in his own meanings that he paid no attention whatever to the nevers. The letter was a delight to him because it gave him the opportunity of a rejoinder, – and he wrote his rejoinder on a scented sheet of note-paper and copied it twice; —

> Dearest Ayala,
>
> Why do you say that it means nothing? It means everything. No man was ever more in earnest in speaking to a lady than I am with you. Why should I not be in earnest when I am so deeply in love? From the first moment in which I saw you down at Glenbogie I knew how it was going to be with me.
>
> As for my mother I don't think she would say a word. Why should she? But I am not the sort of man to be talked out of my intentions in such a matter as this. I have set my heart upon having you and nothing will ever turn me off.
>
> Dearest Ayala, let me have one look to say that you will love me, and I shall be the happiest man in England. I think you so beautiful! I do, indeed. The governor has always said that if I would settle down and marry there should be lots of money. What could I do better with it than make my darling look as grand as the best of them.
>
> *Yours, always meaning it,*
> *Most affectionately,*
> *T. Tringle.*

It almost touched her, – not in the way of love but of gratitude. He was still to her like Bottom with the ass's head, or the Newfoundland dog gambolling out of the water. There was the heavy face, and there were the big chains and the odious rings, and the great hands and the clumsy feet, – making together a creature whom it was impossible even to think of with love. She shuddered as she remembered the proposition which had been made to her in the Coliseum.

And now by writing to him she had brought down upon herself this absolute love-letter. She had thought that by appealing to him as "Dear Tom," and by signing herself his affectionate cousin, she might have prevailed. If he could only be made to understand that it could never mean anything! But now, on the other hand, she had begun to understand that it did *mean* a great deal. He had sent

to her a regular offer of marriage! The magnitude of the thing struck her at last. The heir of all the wealth of her mighty uncle wanted to make her his wife!

But it was to her exactly as though the heir had come to her wearing an ass's head on his shoulders. Love him! Marry him! – or even touch him? Oh, no. They might ill-use her; they might scold her; they might turn her out of the house; but no consideration would induce her to think of Tom Tringle as a lover.

And yet he was in earnest, and honest, and good. And some answer, – some further communication must be made to him. She did recognise some nobility in him, though personally he was so distasteful to her. Now his appeal to her had taken the guise of an absolute offer of marriage he was entitled to a discreet and civil answer. Romantic, dreamy, poetic, childish as she was, she knew as much as that. "Go away, Tom, you fool, you," would no longer do for the occasion. As she thought of it all that night it was borne in upon her more strongly than ever that her only protection would be in telling her aunt, and in getting her aunt to make Tom understand that there must be no more of it. Early on the following morning she found herself in her aunt's bedroom.

# CHAPTER VIII.
# THE LOUT

"Aunt Emmeline, I want you to read this letter." So it was that Ayala commenced the interview. At this moment Ayala was not on much better terms with her aunt than she was with her cousin Augusta. Ayala was a trouble to her, – Lady Tringle, – who was altogether perplexed with the feeling that she had burdened herself with an inmate in her house who was distasteful to her and of whom she could not rid herself. Ayala had turned out on her hands something altogether different from the girl she had intended to cherish and patronise. Ayala was independent; superior rather than inferior to her own girls; more thought of by others; apparently without any touch of that subservience which should have been produced in her by her position. Ayala seemed to demand as much as though she were a daughter of the house, and at the same time to carry herself as though she were more gifted than the daughters of the house. She was less obedient even than a daughter. All this Aunt Emmeline could not endure with a placid bosom. She was herself kind of heart. She acknowledged her duty to her dead sister. She wished to protect and foster the orphan. She did not even yet wish to punish Ayala by utter desertion. She would protect her in opposition to Augusta's more declared malignity; but she did wish to be rid of Ayala, if she only knew how.

She took her son's letter and read it, and as a matter of course misunderstood the position. At Glenbogie something had been whispered to her about Tom and Ayala, but she had not believed much in it. Ayala was a child, and Tom was to her not much more than a boy. But now here was a genuine love-letter, – a letter in which her son had made a distinct proposition to marry the orphan. She did not stop to consider why Ayala had brought the letter to her, but entertained at once an idea that the two young people were going to vex her very soul by a lamentable love affair. How imprudent she had been to let the two young people be together in Rome, seeing that the matter had been whispered to her at Glenbogie! "How long has this been going on?" she asked, severely.

"He used to tease me at Glenbogie, and now he is doing it again," said Ayala.

"There must certainly be put an end to it. You must go away."

Ayala knew at once that her aunt was angry with her, and was indignant at the injustice. "Of course there must be put an end to it, Aunt Emmeline. He has no right to annoy me when I tell him not."

"I suppose you have encouraged him."

This was too cruel to be borne! Encouraged him! Ayala's anger was caused not so much by a feeling that her aunt had misappreciated the cause of her coming as that it should have been thought possible that she should have "encouraged" such a lover. It was the outrage to her taste rather than to her conduct which afflicted her. "He is a lout," she said; "a stupid lout!" thus casting her scorn upon the mother as well as on the son, and, indeed, upon the whole family. "I have not encouraged him. It is untrue."

"Ayala, you are very impertinent."

"And you are very unjust. Because I want to put a stop to it I come to you, and you tell me that I encourage him. You are worse than Augusta."

This was too much for the good nature even of Aunt Emmeline. Whatever may have been the truth as to the love affair, however innocent Ayala may have been in that matter, or however guilty Tom, such words from a niece to her aunt, – from a dependent to her superior, – were unpardonable. The extreme youthfulness of the girl, a peculiar look of childhood which she still had with her, made the feeling so much the stronger. "You are worse than Augusta!"

And this was said to her who was specially conscious of her endeavours to mitigate Augusta's just anger. She bridled up, and tried to look big and knit her brows. At that moment she could not

think what must be the end of it, but she felt that Ayala must be crushed. "How dare you speak to me like that, 'Miss'?" she said.

"So you are. It is very cruel. Tom will go on saying all this nonsense to me, and when I come to you you say I encourage him! I never encouraged him. I despise him too much. I did not think my own aunt could have told me that I encouraged any man. No, I didn't. You drive me to it, so that I have got to be impertinent."

"You had better go to your room," said the aunt. Then Ayala, lifting her head as high as she knew how, walked towards the door. "You had better leave that letter with me." Ayala considered the matter for a moment, and then handed the letter a second time to her aunt. It could be nothing to her who saw the letter. She did not want it. Having thus given it up she stalked off in silent disdain and went to her chamber.

Aunt Emmeline, when she was left alone, felt herself to be enveloped in a cloud of doubt. The desirableness of Tom as a husband first forced itself upon her attention, and the undesirableness of Ayala as a wife for Tom. She was perplexed at her own folly in not having seen that danger of this kind would arise when she first proposed to take Ayala into the house. Aunts and uncles do not like the marriage of cousins, and the parents of rich children do not, as a rule, approve of marriages with those which are poor. Although Ayala had been so violent, Lady Tringle could not rid herself of the idea that her darling boy was going to throw himself away. Then her cheeks became red with anger as she remembered that her Tom had been called a lout, – a stupid lout. There was an ingratitude in the use of such language which was not alleviated even by the remembrance that it tended against that matrimonial danger of which she was so much afraid. Ayala was behaving very badly. She ought not to have coaxed Tom to be her lover, and she certainly ought not to have called Tom a lout. And then Ayala had told her aunt that she was unjust and worse than Augusta! It was out of the question that such a state of things should be endured. Ayala must be made to go away.

Before the day was over Lady Tringle spoke to her son, and was astonished to find that the "lout" was quite in earnest, – so much in earnest that he declared his purpose of marrying his cousin in opposition to his father and mother, in opposition even to Ayala herself. He was so much in earnest that he would not be roused to wrath even when he was told that Ayala had called him a lout. And then grew upon the mother a feeling that the young man had never been so little loutish before. For there had been, even in her maternal bosom, a feeling that Tom was open to the criticism expressed on him. Tom had been a hobble-de-hoy, one of those overgrown lads who come late to their manhood, and who are regarded by young ladies as louts. Though he had spent his money only too freely when away, his sisters had sometimes said that he could not say "bo to a goose" at home. But now, – now Tom was quite an altered young man. When his own letter was shown to him he simply said that he meant to stick to it. When it was represented to him that his cousin would be quite an unfit wife for him he assured his mother that his own opinion on that matter was very different. When his father's anger was threatened he declared that his father would have no right to be angry with him if he married a lady. At the word "lout" he simply smiled. "She'll come to think different from that before she's done with me," he said, with a smile. Even the mother could not but perceive that the young man had been much improved by his love.

But what was she to do? Two or three days went on, during which there was no reconciliation between her and Ayala. Between Augusta and Ayala no word was spoken. Messages were taken to her by Gertrude, the object of which was to induce her to ask her aunt's pardon. But Ayala was of opinion that her aunt ought to ask her pardon, and could not be beaten from it. "Why did she say that I encouraged him?" she demanded indignantly of Gertrude. "I don't think she did encourage him," said Gertrude to her mother. This might possibly be true, but not the less had she misbehaved. And though she might not yet have encouraged her lover it was only too probable that she might do so when she found that her lover was quite in earnest.

Lady Tringle was much harassed. And then there came an additional trouble. Gertrude informed her mother that she had engaged herself to Mr. Francis Houston, and that Mr. Houston was going to write to her father with the object of proposing himself as a son-in-law. Mr. Houston came also to herself, and told her, in the most natural tone in the world, that he intended to marry her daughter. She had not known what to say. It was Sir Thomas who managed all matters of money. She had an idea that Mr. Houston was very poor. But then so also had been Mr. Traffick, who had been received into the family with open arms. But then Mr. Traffick had a career, whereas Mr. Houston was lamentably idle. She could only refer Mr. Houston to Sir Thomas, and beg him not to come among them any more till Sir Thomas had decided. Upon this Gertrude also got angry, and shut herself up in her room. The apartments Ruperti were, therefore, upon the whole, an uncomfortable home to them.

Letters upon letters were written to Sir Thomas, and letters upon letters came. The first letter had been about Ayala. He had been much more tender towards Ayala than her aunt had been. He talked of calf-love, and said that Tom was a fool; but he had not at once thought it necessary to give imperative orders for Tom's return. As to Ayala's impudence, he evidently regarded it as nothing. It was not till Aunt Emmeline had spoken out in her third letter that he seemed to recognise the possibility of getting rid of Ayala altogether. And this he did in answer to a suggestion which had been made to him. "If she likes to change with her sister Lucy, and you like it, I shall not object," said Sir Thomas. Then there came an order to Tom that he should return to Lombard Street at once; but this order had been rendered abortive by the sudden return of the whole family. Sir Thomas, in his first letter as to Gertrude, had declared that the Houston marriage would not do at all. Then, when he was told that Gertrude and Mr. Houston had certainly met each other more than once since an order had been given for their separation, he desired the whole family to come back at once to Merle Park.

The proposition as to Lucy had arisen in this wise. Tom being in the same house with Ayala, of course had her very much at advantage, and would carry on his suit in spite of any abuse which she might lavish upon him. It was quite in vain that she called him lout. "You'll think very different from that some of these days, Ayala," he said, more seriously.

"No, I shan't; I shall think always the same."

"When you know how much I love you, you'll change."

"I don't want you to love me," she said; "and if you were anything that is good you wouldn't go on after I have told you so often. It is not manly of you. You have brought me to all manner of trouble. It is your fault, but they make me suffer."

After that Ayala again went to her aunt, and on this occasion the family misfortune was discussed in more seemly language. Ayala was still indignant, but she said nothing insolent. Aunt Emmeline was still averse to her niece, but she abstained from crimination. They knew each as enemies, but recognised the wisdom of keeping the peace. "As for that, Aunt Emmeline," Ayala said, "you may be quite sure that I shall never encourage him. I shall never like him well enough."

"Very well. Then we need say no more about that, my dear. Of course, it must be unpleasant to us all, being in the same house together."

"It is very unpleasant to me, when he will go on bothering me like that. It makes me wish that I were anywhere else."

Then Aunt Emmeline began to think about it very seriously. It was very unpleasant. Ayala had made herself disagreeable to all the ladies of the family, and only too agreeable to the young gentleman. Nor did the manifest favour of Sir Thomas do much towards raising Ayala in Lady Tringle's estimation. Sir Thomas had only laughed when Augusta had been requested to go upstairs for the scrap-book. Sir Thomas had been profuse with his presents even when Ayala had been most persistent in her misbehaviour. And then all that affair of the Marchesa, and even Mr. Traffick's infatuation! If Ayala wished that she were somewhere else would it not be well to indulge her wish! Aunt Emmeline certainly wished it. "If you think so, perhaps some arrangement can be made," said Aunt Emmeline, very slowly.

"What arrangement?"

"You must not suppose that I wish to turn you out?"

"But what arrangement?"

"You see, Ayala, that unfortunately we have not all of us hit it off nicely; have we?"

"Not at all, Aunt Emmeline. Augusta is always angry with me. And you, – you think that I have encouraged Tom."

"I am saying nothing about that, Ayala."

"But what arrangement is it, Aunt Emmeline?" The matter was one of fearful import to Ayala. She was prudent enough to understand that well. The arrangement must be one by which she would be banished from all the wealth of the Tringles. Her coming among them had not been a success. She had already made them tired of her by her petulance and independence. Young as she was she could see that, and comprehend the material injury she had done herself by her folly. She had been very wrong in telling Augusta to go upstairs. She had been wrong in the triumph of her exclusive visits to the Marchesa. She had been wrong in walking away with Mr. Traffick on the Pincian. She could see that. She had not been wrong in regard to Tom, – except in calling him a lout; but whether wrong or right she had been most unfortunate. But the thing had been done, and she must go.

At this moment the wealth of the Tringles seemed to be more to her than it had ever been before, – and her own poverty and destitution seemed to be more absolute. When the word "arrangement" was whispered to her there came upon her a clear idea of all that which she was to lose. She was to be banished from Merle Park, from Queen's Gate, and from Glenbogie. For her there were to be no more carriages, and horses, and pretty trinkets; – none of that abandon of the luxury of money among which the Tringles lived. But she had done it for herself, and she would not say a word in opposition to the fate which was before her. "What arrangement, aunt?" she said again, in a voice which was intended to welcome any arrangement that might be made.

Then her aunt spoke very softly. "Of course, dear Ayala, we do not wish to do less than we at first intended. But as you are not happy here – " Then she paused, almost ashamed of herself.

"I am not happy here," said Ayala, boldly.

"How would it be if you were to change, – with Lucy?"

The idea which had been present to Lady Tringle for some weeks past had never struck Ayala. The moment she heard it she felt that she was more than ever bound to assent. If the home from which she was to be banished was good, then would that good fall upon Lucy. Lucy would have the carriages and the horses and the trinkets, Lucy, who certainly was not happy at Kingsbury Crescent. "I should be very glad, indeed," said Ayala.

Her voice was so brave and decided that, in itself, it gave fresh offence to her aunt. Was there to be no regret after so much generosity? But she misunderstood the girl altogether. As the words were coming from her lips, – "I should be very glad, indeed," – Ayala's heart was sinking with tenderness as she remembered how much after all had been done for her. But as they wished her to go there should be not a word, not a sign of unwillingness on her part.

"Then perhaps it can be arranged," said Lady Tringle.

"I don't know what Uncle Dosett may say. Perhaps they are very fond of Lucy now."

"They wouldn't wish to stand in her way, I should think."

"At any rate, I won't. If you, and my uncles, and Aunt Margaret, will consent, I will go whenever you choose. Of course I must do just as I'm told."

Aunt Emmeline made a faint demur to this; but still the matter was held to be arranged. Letters were written to Sir Thomas, and letters came, and at last even Sir Thomas had assented. He suggested, in the first place, that all the facts which would follow the exchange should be explained to Ayala; but he was obliged after a while to acknowledge that this would be inexpedient. The girl was willing; and knew no doubt that she was to give up the great wealth of her present home. But she had proved herself to be an unfit participator, and it was better that she should go.

Then the departure of them all from Rome was hurried on by the indiscretion of Gertrude. Gertrude declared that she had a right to her lover. As to his having no income, what matter for that. Everyone knew that Septimus Traffick had no income. Papa had income enough for them all. Mr. Houston was a gentleman. Till this moment no one had known of how strong a will of her own Gertrude was possessed. When Gertrude declared that she would not consent to be separated from Mr. Houston then they were all hurried home.

# CHAPTER IX.
# THE EXCHANGE

Such was the state of things when Mr. Dosett brought the three letters home with him to Kingsbury Crescent, having been so much disturbed by the contents of the two which were addressed to himself as to have found himself compelled to leave his office two hours before the proper time. The three letters were handed together by her uncle to Lucy, and she, seeing the importance of the occasion, read the two open ones before she broke the envelope of her own. That from Sir Thomas came first, and was as follows; —

*Lombard Street, January, 187 – .*

My dear Dosett,

I have had a correspondence with the ladies at Rome which has been painful in its nature, but which I had better perhaps communicate to you at once. Ayala has not got on as well with Lady Tringle and the girls as might have been wished, and they all think it will be better that she and Lucy should change places. I chiefly write to give my assent. Your sister will no doubt write to you. I may as well mention to you, should you consent to take charge of Ayala, that I have made some provision for her in my will, and that I shall not change it. I have to add on my own account that I have no complaint of my own to make against Ayala.

*Yours sincerely,*
*T. Tringle.*

Lucy, when she had read this, proceeded at once to the letter from her aunt. The matter to her was one of terrible importance, but the importance was quite as great to Ayala. She had been allowed to go up alone into her own room. The letters were of such a nature that she could hardly have read them calmly in the presence of her Aunt Dosett. It was thus that her Aunt Emmeline had written; —

*Palazzo Ruperti, Rome, Thursday.*

My dear Reginald,

I am sure you will be sorry to hear that we are in great trouble here. This has become so bad that we are obliged to apply to you to help us. Now you must understand that I do not mean to say a word against dear Ayala; – only she does not suit. It will occur sometimes that people who are most attached to each other do not suit. So it has been with dear Ayala. She is not happy with us. She has not perhaps accommodated herself to her cousins quite as carefully as she might have done. She is fully as sensible of this as I am, and is, herself, persuaded that there had better be a change.

Now, my dear Reginald, I am quite aware that when poor Egbert died it was I who chose Ayala, and that you took Lucy partly in compliance with my wishes. Now I write to suggest that there should be a change. I am sure you will give me credit for a desire to do the best I can for both the poor dear girls. I did think that this might be best done by letting Ayala come to us. I now think that Lucy would do better with her cousins, and that Ayala would be more attractive without the young people around her.

When I see you I will tell you everything. There has been no great fault. She has spoken a word or two to me which had been better unsaid, but I am well convinced that it has come from hot temper and not from a bad heart. Perhaps I had better

tell you the truth. Tom has admired her. She has behaved very well; but she could not bear to be spoken to, and so there have been unpleasantnesses. And the girls certainly have not got on well together. Sir Thomas quite agrees with me that if you will consent there had better be a change.

I will not write to dear Lucy herself because you and Margaret can explain it all so much better, – if you will consent to our plan. Ayala also will write to her sister. But pray tell her from me that I will love her very dearly if she will come to me. And indeed I have loved Ayala almost as though she were my own, only we have not been quite able to hit it off together.

Of course neither has Sir Thomas or have I any idea of escaping from a responsibility. I should be quite unhappy if I did not have one of poor dear Egbert's girls with me. Only I do think that Lucy would be the best for us; and Ayala thinks so too. I should be quite unhappy if I were doing this in opposition to Ayala.

We shall be in England almost as soon as this letter, and I should be so glad if this could be decided at once. If a thing like this is to be done it is so much better for all parties that it should be done quickly. Pray give my best love to Margaret, and tell her that Ayala shall bring everything with her that she wants.

*Your most affectionate sister,*
*Emmeline Tringle.*

The letter, though it was much longer than her uncle's, going into details, such as that of Tom's unfortunate passion for his cousin, had less effect upon Lucy, as it did not speak with so much authority as that from Sir Thomas. What Sir Thomas said would surely be done; whereas Aunt Emmeline was only a woman, and her letter, unsupported, might not have carried conviction. But, if Sir Thomas wished it, surely it must be done. Then, at last, came Ayala's letter; —

*Rome, Thursday.*

Dearest, dearest Lucy,

Oh, I have such things to write to you! Aunt Emmeline has told it all to Uncle Reginald. You are to come and be the princess, and I am to go and be the milkmaid at home. I am quite content that it should be so because I know that it will be the best. You ought to be a princess and I ought to be a milkmaid.

It has been coming almost ever since the first day that I came among them, – since I told Augusta to go upstairs for the scrap-book. I felt from the very moment in which the words were uttered that I had gone and done for myself. But I am not a bit sorry, as you will come in my place. Augusta will very soon be gone now, and Aunt Emmeline is not bad at all if you will only not contradict her. I always contradicted her, and I know that I have been a fool. But I am not a bit sorry, as you are to come instead of me.

But it is not only about Augusta and Aunt Emmeline. There has been that oaf Tom. Poor Tom! I do believe that he is the most good-natured fellow alive. And if he had not so many chains I should not dislike him so very much. But he will go on saying horrible things to me. And then he wrote me a letter! Oh dear! I took the letter to Aunt Emmeline, and that made the quarrel. She said that I had – encouraged him! Oh, Lucy, if you will think of that! I was so angry that I said ever so much to her, – till she sent me out of the room. She had no business to say that I encouraged him. It was shameful! But she has never forgiven me, because I scolded her. So they have decided among them that I am to be sent away, and that you are to come in my place.

My own darling Lucy, it will be ever so much better. I know that you are not happy in Kingsbury Crescent, and that I shall bear it very much better. I can sit still and mend sheets.

Poor Ayala, how little she knew herself!

And you will make a beautiful grand lady, quiescent and dignified as a grand lady ought to be. At any rate it would be impossible that I should remain here. Tom is bad enough, but to be told that I encourage him is more than I can bear.

I shall see you very soon, but I cannot help writing and telling it to you all. Give my love to Aunt Dosett. If she will consent to receive me I will endeavour to be good to her. In the meantime good-bye.
*Your most affectionate sister,*
*Ayala.*

When Lucy had completed the reading of the letters she sat for a considerable time wrapped in thought. There was, in truth, very much that required thinking. It was proposed that the whole tenour of her life should be changed, and changed in a direction which would certainly suit her taste. She had acknowledged to herself that she had hated the comparative poverty of her Uncle Dosett's life, hating herself in that she was compelled to make such acknowledgment. But there had been more than the poverty which had been distasteful to her, – a something which she had been able to tell herself that she might be justified in hating without shame. There had been to her an absence of intellectual charm in the habits and manners of Kingsbury Crescent which she had regarded as unfortunate and depressing. There had been no thought of art delights. No one read poetry. No one heard music. No one looked at pictures. A sheet to be darned was the one thing of greatest importance. The due development of a leg of mutton, the stretching of a pound of butter, the best way of repressing the washerwoman's bills, – these had been the matters of interest. And they had not been made the less irritating to her by her aunt's extreme goodness in the matter. The leg of mutton was to be developed in the absence of her uncle, – if possible without his knowledge. He was to have his run of clean linen. Lucy did not grudge him anything, but was sickened by that partnership in economy which was established between her and her aunt. Undoubtedly from time to time she had thought of the luxuries which had been thrown in Ayala's way. There had been a regret, – not that Ayala should have them but that she should have missed them. Money she declared that she despised; – but the easy luxury of the bijou was sweet to her memory.

Now it was suggested to her suddenly that she was to exchange the poverty for the luxury, and to return to a mode of life in which her mind might be devoted to things of beauty. The very scenery of Glenbogie, – what a charm it would have for her! Judging from her uncle's manner, as well as she could during that moment in which he handed to her the letter, she imagined that he intended to make no great objection. Her aunt disliked her. She was sure that her aunt disliked her in spite of the partnership. Only that there was one other view of the case – how happy might the transfer be. Her uncle was always gentle to her, but there could hardly as yet have grown up any strong affection for her. To him she was grateful, but she could not tell herself that to part from him would be a pang. There was, however, another view of the case.

Ayala! How would it be with Ayala! Would Ayala like the partnership and the economies? Would Ayala be cheerful as she sat opposite to her aunt for four hours at a time! Ayala had said that she could sit still and mend sheets, but was it not manifest enough that Ayala knew nothing of the life of which she was speaking. And would she, Lucy, be able to enjoy the glories of Glenbogie while she thought that Ayala was eating out her heart in the sad companionship of Kingsbury Crescent? For above an hour she sat and thought; but of one aspect which the affair bore she did not think. She did not reflect that she and Ayala were in the hands of Fate, and that they must both do as their elders should require of them.

At last there came a knock at the door, and her aunt entered. She would sooner that it should have been her uncle: but there was no choice but that the matter should be now discussed with the woman whom she did not love, – this matter that was so dreadful to herself in all its bearings, and so dreadful to one for whom she would willingly sacrifice herself if it were possible! She did not know what she could say to create sympathy with Aunt Dosett. "Lucy," said Aunt Dosett, "this is a very serious proposal."

"Very serious," said Lucy, sternly.

"I have not read the letters, but your uncle has told me about it." Then Lucy handed her the two letters, keeping that from Ayala to herself, and she sat perfectly still while her aunt read them both slowly. "Your Aunt Emmeline is certainly in earnest," said Mrs. Dosett.

"Aunt Emmeline is very good-natured, and perhaps she will change her mind if we tell her that we wish it."

"But Sir Thomas has agreed to it."

"I am sure my uncle will give way if Aunt Emmeline will ask him. He says he has no complaint to make against Ayala. I think it is Augusta, and Augusta will be married, and will go away very soon."

Then there came a change, a visible change, over the countenance of Aunt Dosett, and a softening of the voice, – so that she looked and spoke as Lucy had not seen or heard her before. There are people apparently so hard, so ungenial, so unsympathetic, that they who only half know them expect no trait of tenderness, think that features so little alluring cannot be compatible with softness. Lucy had acknowledged her Aunt Dosett to be good, but believed her to be incapable of being touched. But a word or two had now conquered her. The girl did not want to leave her, – did not seize the first opportunity of running from her poverty to the splendour of the Tringles! "But, Lucy," she said, and came and placed herself nearer to Lucy on the bed.

"Ayala – ," said Lucy, sobbing.

"I will be kind to her, – perhaps kinder than I have been to you."

"You have been kind, and I have been ungrateful. I know it. But I will do better now, Aunt Dosett. I will stay, if you will have me."

"They are rich and powerful, and you will have to do as they direct."

"No! Who are they that I should be made to come and go at their bidding? They cannot make me leave you."

"But they can rid themselves of Ayala. You see what your uncle says about money for Ayala."

"I hate money."

"Money is a thing which none of us can afford to hate. Do you think it will not be much to your Uncle Reginald to know that you are both provided for? Already he is wretched because there will be nothing to come to you. If you go to your Aunt Emmeline, Sir Thomas will do for you as he has done for Ayala. Dear Lucy, it is not that I want to send you away." Then for the first time Lucy put her arm round her aunt's neck. "But it had better be as is proposed, if your aunt still wishes it, when she comes home. I and your Uncle Reginald would not do right were we to allow you to throw away the prospects that are offered you. It is natural that Lady Tringle should be anxious about her son."

"She need not, in the least," said Lucy, indignantly.

"But you see what they say."

"It is his fault, not hers. Why should she be punished?"

"Because he is Fortune's favourite, and she is not. It is no good kicking against the pricks, my dear. He is his father's son and heir, and everything must give way to him."

"But Ayala does not want him. Ayala despises him. It is too hard that she is to lose everything because a young man like that will go on making himself disagreeable. They have no right to do it after having accustomed Ayala to such a home. Don't you feel that, Aunt Dosett?"

"I do feel it."

"However it might have been arranged at first, it ought to remain now. Even though Ayala and I are only girls, we ought not to be changed about as though we were horses. If she had done anything wrong, – but Uncle Tom says that she has done nothing wrong."

"I suppose she has spoken to her aunt disrespectfully."

"Because her aunt told her that she had encouraged this man. What would you have a girl say when she is falsely accused like that? Would you say it to me merely because some horrid man would come and speak to me?" Then there came a slight pang of conscience as she remembered Isadore Hamel in Kensington Gardens. If the men were not thought to be horrid, then perhaps the speaking might be a sin worthy of most severe accusation.

There was nothing more said about it that night, nor till the following afternoon, when Mr. Dosett returned home at the usual hour from his office. Then Lucy was closeted with him for a quarter-of-an-hour in the drawing-room. He had been into the City and seen Sir Thomas. Sir Thomas had been of opinion that it would be much better that Lady Tringle's wishes should be obeyed. It was quite true that he himself had no complaint to make against Ayala, but he did think that Ayala had been pert; and, though it might be true that Ayala had not encouraged Tom, there was no knowing what might grow out of such a propensity on Tom's part. And then it could not be pleasant to Lady Tringle or to himself that their son should be banished out of their house. When something was hinted as to the injustice of this, Sir Thomas endeavoured to put all that right by declaring that, if Lady Tringle's wishes could be attended to in this matter, provision would be made for the two girls. He certainly would not strike Ayala's name out of his will, and as certainly would not take Lucy under his wing as his own child without making some provision for her. Looking at the matter in this light he did not think that Mr. Dosett would be justified in robbing Lucy of the advantages which were offered to her. With this view Mr. Dosett found himself compelled to agree, and with these arguments he declared to Lucy that it was her duty to submit herself to the proposed exchange.

Early in February all the Tringle family were in Queen's Gate, and Lucy on her first visit to the house found that everyone, including Ayala, looked upon the thing as settled. Ayala, who under these circumstances was living on affectionate terms with all the Tringles, except Tom, was quite radiant. "I suppose I had better go to-morrow, aunt?" she said, as though it were a matter of most trivial consequence.

"In a day or two, Ayala, it will be better."

"It shall be Monday, then. You must come over here in a cab, Lucy."

"The carriage shall be sent, my dear."

"But then it must go back with me, Aunt Emmeline."

"It shall, my dear."

"And the horses must be put up, because Lucy and I must change all our things in the drawers." Lucy at the time was sitting in the drawing-room, and Augusta, with most affectionate confidence, was singing to her all the praises of Mr. Traffick. In this way it was settled, and the change, so greatly affecting the fortunes of our two sisters, was arranged.

# CHAPTER X.
# AYALA AND HER AUNT MARGARET

Till the last moment for going Ayala seemed to be childish, triumphant, and indifferent. But, till that last moment, she was never alone with Lucy. It was the presence of her aunt and cousins which sustained her in her hardihood. Tom was never there, – or so rarely as not to affect her greatly. In London he had his own lodgings, and was not encouraged to appear frequently till Ayala should have gone. But Aunt Emmeline and Gertrude were perseveringly gracious, and even Augusta had somewhat relaxed from her wrath. With them Ayala was always good-humoured, but always brave. She affected to rejoice at the change which was to be made. She spoke of Lucy's coming and of her own going as an unmixed blessing. This she did so effectually as to make Aunt Emmeline declare to Sir Thomas, with tears in her eyes, that the girl was heartless. But when, at the moment of parting, the two girls were together, then Ayala broke down.

They were in the room, together, which one had occupied and the other was to occupy, and their boxes were still upon the floor. Though less than six months had passed since Ayala had come among the rich things and Lucy had been among the poor, Ayala's belongings had become much more important than her sister's. Though the Tringles had been unpleasant they had been generous. Lucy was sitting upon the bed, while Ayala was now moving about the room restlessly, now clinging to her sister, and now sobbing almost in despair. "Of course I know," she said. "What is the use of telling stories about it any longer?"

"It is not too late yet, Ayala. If we both go to Uncle Tom he will let us change it."

"Why should it be changed? If I could change it by lifting up my little finger I could not do it. Why should it not be you as well as me? They have tried me, and, – as Aunt Emmeline says, – I have not suited."

"Aunt Dosett is not ill-natured, my darling."

"No, I dare say not. It is I that am bad. It is bad to like pretty things and money, and to hate poor things. Or, rather, I do not believe it is bad at all, because it is so natural. I believe it is all a lie as to its being wicked to love riches. I love them, whether it is wicked or not."

"Oh, Ayala!"

"Do not you? Don't let us be hypocritical, Lucy, now at the last moment. Did you like the way in which they lived in Kingsbury Crescent?"

Lucy paused before she answered. "I like it better than I did," she said. "At any rate, I would willingly go back to Kingsbury Crescent."

"Yes, – for my sake."

"Indeed I would, my pet."

"And for your sake I would rather die than stay. But what is the good of talking about it, Lucy. You and I have no voice in it, though it is all about ourselves. As you say, we are like two tame birds, who have to be moved from one cage into another just as the owner pleases. We belong either to Uncle Tom or Uncle Dosett, just as they like to settle it. Oh, Lucy, I do so wish that I were dead."

"Ayala, that is wicked."

"How can I help it, if I am wicked? What am I to do when I get there? What am I to say to them? How am I to live? Lucy, we shall never see each other."

"I will come across to you constantly."

"I meant to do so, but I didn't. They are two worlds, miles asunder. Lucy, will they let Isadore Hamel come here?" Lucy blushed and hesitated. "I am sure he will come."

Lucy remembered that she had given her friend her address at Queen's Gate, and felt that she would seem to have done it as though she had known that she was about to be transferred to the other uncle's house. "It will make no difference if he does," she said.

"Oh, I have such a dream, – such a castle-in-the-air! If I could think it might ever be so, then I should not want to die."

"What do you dream?" But Lucy, though she asked the question, knew the dream.

"If you had a little house of your own, oh, ever so tiny; and if you and he – ?"

"There is no he."

"There might be. And, if you and he would let me have any corner for myself, then I should be happy. Then I would not want to die. You would, wouldn't you?"

"How can I talk about it, Ayala? There isn't such a thing. But yet, – but yet; oh, Ayala, do you not know that to have you with me would be better than anything?"

"No; – not better than anything; – second best. He would be best. I do so hope that he may be 'he.' Come in." There was a knock at the door, and Aunt Emmeline, herself, entered the room.

"Now, my dears, the horses are standing there, and the men are coming up for the luggage. Ayala, I hope we shall see you very often. And remember that, as regards anything that is unpleasant, bygones shall be bygones." Then there was a crowd of farewell kisses, and in a few minutes Ayala was alone in the carriage on her road up to Kingsbury Crescent.

The thing had been done so quickly that hitherto there had hardly been time for tears. To Ayala herself the most remarkable matter in the whole affair had been Tom's persistence. He had, at last, been allowed to bring them home from Rome, there having been no other gentleman whose services were available for the occasion. He had been watched on the journey very closely, and had had no slant in his favour, as the young lady to whom he was devoted was quite as anxious to keep out of his way as had been the others of the party to separate them. But he had made occasion, more than once, sufficient to express his intention. "I don't mean to give you up, you know," he had said to her. "When I say a thing I mean it. I am not going to be put off by my mother. And as for the governor he would not say a word against it if he thought we were both in earnest."

"But I ain't in earnest," said Ayala; "or rather, I am very much in earnest."

"So am I. That's all I've got to say just at present." From this there grew up within her mind a certain respect for the "lout," which, however, made him more disagreeable to her than he might have been had he been less persistent.

It was late in the afternoon, not much before dinner, when Ayala reached the house in Kingsbury Crescent. Hitherto she had known almost nothing of her Aunt Dosett, and had never been intimate even with her uncle. They, of course, had heard much of her, and had been led to suppose that she was much less tractable than the simple Lucy. This feeling had been so strong that Mr. Dosett himself would hardly have been led to sanction the change had it not been for that promise from Sir Thomas that he would not withdraw the provision he had made for Ayala, and would do as much for Lucy if Lucy should become an inmate of his family. Mrs. Dosett had certainly been glad to welcome any change, when a change was proposed to her. There had grown up something of affection at the last moment, but up to that time she had certainly disliked her niece. Lucy had appeared to her to be at first idle and then sullen. The girl had seemed to affect a higher nature than her own, and had been wilfully indifferent to the little things which had given to her life whatever interest it possessed. Lucy's silence had been a reproach to her, though she herself had been able to do so little to abolish the silence. Perhaps Ayala might be better.

But they were both afraid of Ayala, – as they had not been afraid of Lucy before her arrival. They made more of preparation for her in their own minds, and, as to their own conduct, Mr. Dosett was there himself to receive her, and was conscious in doing so that there had been something of failure in their intercourse with Lucy. Lucy had been allowed to come in without preparation, with an expectation that she would fall easily into her place, and there had been failure. There had been no regular consultation as to this new coming, but both Mr. and Mrs. Dosett were conscious of an intended effort.

Lady Tringle and Mr. Dosett had always been Aunt Emmeline and Uncle Reginald, by reason of the nearness of their relationship. Circumstances of closer intercourse had caused Sir Thomas to be Uncle Tom. But Mrs. Dosett had never become more than Aunt Dosett to either of the girls. This in itself had been matter almost of soreness to her, and she had intended to ask Lucy to adopt the more endearing form of her Christian name; but there had been so little endearment between them that the moment for doing so had never come. She was thinking of all this up in her own room, preparatory to the reception of this other girl, while Mr. Dosett was bidding her welcome to Kingsbury Crescent in the drawing-room below.

Ayala had been dissolved in tears during the drive round by Kensington to Bayswater, and was hardly able to repress her sobs as she entered the house. "My dear," said the uncle, "we will do all that we can to make you happy here."

"I am sure you will; but – but – it is so sad coming away from Lucy."

"Lucy I am sure will be happy with her cousins." If Lucy's happiness were made to depend on her cousins, thought Ayala, it would not be well assured. "And my sister Emmeline is always good-natured."

"Aunt Emmeline is very good, only – "

"Only what?"

"I don't know. But it is such a sudden change, Uncle Reginald."

"Yes, it is a very great change, my dear. They are very rich and we are poor enough. I should hardly have consented to this, for your sake, but that there are reasons which will make it better for you both."

"As to that," said Ayala, stoutly, "I had to come away. I didn't suit."

"You shall suit us, my dear."

"I hope so. I will try. I know more now than I did then. I thought I was to be Augusta's equal."

"We shall all be equal here."

"People ought to be equal, I think, – except old people and young people. I will do whatever you and my aunt tell me. There are no young people here, so there won't be any trouble of that kind."

"There will be no other young person, certainly. You shall go upstairs now and see your aunt."

Then there was the interview upstairs, which consisted chiefly in promises and kisses, and Ayala was left alone to unpack her boxes and prepare for dinner. Before she began her operations she sat still for a few moments, and with an effort collected her energies and made her resolution. She had said to Lucy in her passion that she would that she were dead. That that should have been wicked was not matter of much concern to her. But she acknowledged to herself that it had been weak and foolish. There was her life before her, and she would still endeavour to be happy though there had been so much to distress her. She had flung away wealth. She was determined to fling it away still when it should present itself to her in the shape of her cousin Tom. But she had her dreams, – her day-dreams, – those castles in the air which it had been the delight of her life to construct, and in the building of which her hours had never run heavy with her. Isadore Hamel would, of course, come again, and would, of course, marry Lucy, and then there would be a home for her after her own heart. With Isadore as her brother, and her own own Lucy close to her, she would not feel the want of riches and of luxury. If there were only some intellectual charm in her life, some touch of art, some devotion to things beautiful, then she could do without gold and silver and costly raiment. Of course, Isadore would come; and then – then – in the far distance, something else would come, something of which in her castle-building she had not yet developed the form, of which she did not yet know the bearing, or the manner of its beauty, or the music of its voice; but as to which she was very sure that its form would be beautiful and its voice full of music. It can hardly be said that this something was the centre of her dreams, or the foundation of her castles. It was the extreme point of perfection at which she would arrive at last, when her thoughts had become sublimated by the intensity of her thinking. It was the tower of the castle from which she could look down upon the

inferior world below, – the last point of the dream in arranging which she would all but escape from earth to heaven, – when in the moment of her escape the cruel waking back into the world would come upon her. But this she knew, – that this something, whatever might be its form or whatever its voice, would be exactly the opposite of Tom Tringle.

She had fallen away from her resolution to her dreams for a time, when suddenly she jumped up and began her work with immense energy. Open went one box after another, and in five minutes the room was strewed with her possessions. The modest set of drawers which was to supply all her wants was filled with immediate haste. Things were deposited in whatever nooks might be found, and every corner was utilized. Her character for tidiness had never stood high. At the bijou Lucy, or her mother, or the favourite maid, had always been at hand to make good her deficiencies with a reproach which had never gone beyond a smile or a kiss. At Glenbogie and even on the journey there had been attendant lady's maids. But here she was all alone.

Everything was still in confusion when she was called to dinner. As she went down she recalled to herself her second resolution. She would be good; – whereby she intimated to herself that she would endeavour to do what might be pleasing to her Aunt Dosett. She had little doubt as to her uncle. But she was aware that there had been differences between her aunt and Lucy. If Lucy had found it difficult to be good how great would be the struggle required from her!

She sat herself down at table a little nearer to her aunt than her uncle, because it was specially her aunt whom she wished to win, and after a few minutes she put out her little soft hand and touched that of Mrs. Dosett. "My dear," said that lady. "I hope you will be happy."

"I am determined to be happy," said Ayala, "if you will let me love you."

Mrs. Dosett was not beautiful, nor was she romantic. In appearance she was the very reverse of Ayala. The cares of the world, the looking after shillings and their results, had given her that look of commonplace insignificance which is so frequent and so unattractive among middle-aged women upon whom the world leans heavily. But there was a tender corner in her heart which was still green, and from which a little rill of sweet water could be made to flow when it was touched aright. On this occasion a tear came to her eye as she pressed her niece's hand; but she said nothing. She was sure, however, that she would love Ayala much better than she had been able to love Lucy.

"What would you like me to do?" asked Ayala, when her aunt accompanied her that night to her bed room.

"To do, my dear? What do you generally do?"

"Nothing. I read a little and draw a little, but I do nothing useful. I mean it to be different now."

"You shall do as you please, Ayala."

"Oh, but I mean it. And you must tell me. Of course things have to be different."

"We are not rich like your uncle and aunt Tringle."

"Perhaps it is better not to be rich, so that one may have something to do. But I want you to tell me as though you really cared for me."

"I will care for you," said Aunt Dosett, sobbing.

"Then first begin by telling me what to do. I will try and do it. Of course I have thought about it, coming away from all manner of rich things; and I have determined that it shall not make me unhappy. I will rise above it. I will begin to-morrow and do anything if you will tell me." Then Aunt Dosett took her in her arms and kissed her, and declared that on the morrow they would begin their work together in perfect confidence and love with each other.

"I think she will do better than Lucy," said Mrs. Dosett to her husband that night.

"Lucy was a dear girl too," said Uncle Reginald.

"Oh, yes; – quite so. I don't mean to say a word against Lucy; but I think that I can do better with Ayala. She will be more diligent." Uncle Reginald said nothing to this, but he could not but think that of the two Lucy would be the one most likely to devote herself to hard work.

On the next morning Ayala went out with her aunt on the round to the shopkeepers, and listened with profound attention to the domestic instructions which were given to her on the occasion. When she came home she knew much of which she had known nothing before. What was the price of mutton, and how much mutton she was expected as one of the family to eat per week; what were the necessities of the house in bread and butter, how far a pint of milk might be stretched, – with a proper understanding that her Uncle Reginald as head of the family was to be subjected to no limits. And before their return from that walk, – on the first morning of Ayala's sojourn, – Ayala had undertaken always to call Mrs. Dosett Aunt Margaret for the future.

# CHAPTER XI.
# TOM TRINGLE COMES TO THE CRESCENT

During the next three months, up to the end of the winter and through the early spring, things went on without any change either in Queen's Gate or Kingsbury Crescent. The sisters saw each other occasionally, but not as frequently as either of them had intended. Lucy was not encouraged in the use of cabs, nor was the carriage lent to her often for the purpose of going to the Crescent. The reader may remember that she had been in the habit of walking alone in Kensington Gardens, and a walk across Kensington Gardens would carry her the greater part of the distance to Kingsbury Crescent. But Lucy, in her new circumstances, was not advised, – perhaps, I may say, was not allowed, – to walk alone. Lady Tringle, being a lady of rank and wealth, was afraid, or pretended to be afraid, of the lions. Poor Ayala was really afraid of the lions. Thus it came to pass that the intercourse was not frequent. In her daily life Lucy was quiet and obedient. She did not run counter to Augusta, whose approaching nuptials gave her that predominance in the house which is always accorded to young ladies in her recognised position. Gertrude was at this time a subject of trouble at Queen's Gate. Sir Thomas had not been got to approve of Mr. Frank Houston, and Gertrude had positively refused to give him up. Sir Thomas was, indeed, considerably troubled by his children. There had been a period of disagreeable obstinacy even with Augusta before Mr. Traffick had been taken into the bosom of the family. Now Gertrude had her own ideas, and so also had Tom. Tom had become quite a trouble. Sir Thomas and Lady Tringle, together, had determined that Tom must be weaned; by which they meant that he must be cured of his love. But Tom had altogether refused to be weaned. Mr. Dosett had been requested to deny him admittance to the house in Kingsbury Crescent, and as this request had been fully endorsed by Ayala herself orders had been given to the effect to the parlour-maid. Tom had called more than once, and had been unable to obtain access to his beloved. But yet he resolutely refused to be weaned. He told his father to his face that he intended to marry Ayala, and abused his mother roundly when she attempted to interfere. The whole family was astounded by his perseverance, so that there had already sprung up an idea in the minds of some among the Tringles that he would be successful at last. Augusta was very firm, declaring that Ayala was a viper. But Sir Thomas, himself, began to inquire, within his own bosom, whether Tom should not be allowed to settle down in the manner desired by himself. In no consultation held at Queen's Gate on the subject was there the slightest expression of an opinion that Tom might be denied the opportunity of settling down as he wished through any unwillingness on the part of Ayala.

When things were in this position, Tom sought an interview one morning with his father in Lombard Street. They rarely saw each other at the office, each having his own peculiar branch of business. Sir Thomas manipulated his millions in a little back room of his own, while Tom, dealing probably with limited thousands, made himself useful in an outer room. They never went to, or left, the office together, but Sir Thomas always took care to know that his son was or was not on the premises. "I want to say a word or two, Sir, about – about the little affair of mine," said Tom.

"What affair?" said Sir Thomas, looking up from his millions.

"I think I should like to – marry."

"The best thing you can do, my boy; only it depends upon who the young lady may be."

"My mind is made up about that, Sir; I mean to marry my cousin. I don't see why a young man isn't to choose for himself." Then Sir Thomas preached his sermon, but preached it in the manner which men are wont to use when they know that they are preaching in vain. There is a tone of refusal, which, though the words used may be manifestly enough words of denial, is in itself indicative of assent. Sir Thomas ended the conference by taking a week to think over the matter, and when the week was over gave way. He was still inclined to think that marriages with cousins had better be

avoided; but he gave way, and at last promised that if Tom and Ayala were of one mind an income should be forthcoming.

For the carrying out of this purpose it was necessary that the door of Uncle Dosett's house should be unlocked, and with the object of turning the key Sir Thomas himself called at the Admiralty. "I find my boy is quite in earnest about this," he said to the Admiralty clerk.

"Oh; indeed."

"I can't say I quite like it myself." Mr. Dosett could only shake his head. "Cousins had better be cousins, and nothing more."

"And then you would probably expect him to get money?"

"Not at all," said Sir Thomas, proudly. "I have got money enough for them both. It isn't an affair of money. To make a long story short, I have given my consent; and, therefore, if you do not mind, I shall be glad if you will allow Tom to call at the Crescent. Of course, you may have your own views; but I don't suppose you can hope to do better for the girl. Cousins do marry, you know, very often." Mr. Dosett could only say that he could not expect to do anything for the girl nearly so good, and that, as far as he was concerned, his nephew Tom should be made quite welcome at Kingsbury Crescent. It was not, he added, in his power to answer for Ayala. As to this, Sir Thomas did not seem to have any doubts. The good things of the world, which it was in his power to offer, were so good, that it was hardly probable that a young lady in Ayala's position should refuse them.

"My dear," said Aunt Margaret, the next morning, speaking in her most suasive tone, "your Cousin Tom is to be allowed to call here."

"Tom Tringle?"

"Yes, my dear. Sir Thomas has consented."

"Then he had better not," said Ayala, bristling up in hot anger. "Uncle Tom has got nothing to do with it, either in refusing or consenting. I won't see him."

"I think you must see him if he calls."

"But I don't want. Oh, Aunt Margaret, pray make him not come. I don't like him a bit. We are doing so very well. Are we not, Aunt Margaret?"

"Certainly, my dear, we are doing very well; – at least, I hope so. But you are old enough now to understand that this is a very serious matter."

"Of course it is serious," said Ayala, who certainly was not guilty of the fault of making light of her future life. Those dreams of hers, in which were contained all her hopes and all her aspirations, were very serious to her. This was so much the case that she had by no means thought of her Cousin Tom in a light spirit, as though he were a matter of no moment to her. He was to her just what the Beast must have been to the Beauty, when the Beast first began to be in love. But her safety had consisted in the fact that no one had approved of the Beast being in love with her. Now she could understand that all the horrors of oppression might fall upon her. Of course it was serious; but not the less was she resolved that nothing should induce her to marry the Beast.

"I think you ought to see him when he comes, and to remember how different it will be when he comes with the approval of his father. It is, of course, saying that they are ready to welcome you as their daughter."

"I don't want to be anybody's daughter."

"But, Ayala, there are so many things to be thought of. Here is a young man who is able to give you not only every comfort but great opulence."

"I don't want to be opulent."

"And he will be a baronet."

"I don't care about baronets, Aunt Margaret."

"And you will have a house of your own in which you may be of service to your sister."

"I had rather she should have a house."

"But Tom is not in love with Lucy."

"He is such a lout! Aunt Margaret, I won't have anything to say to him. I would a great deal sooner die. Uncle Tom has no right to send him here. They have got rid of me, and I am very glad of it; but it isn't fair that he should come after me now that I'm gone away. Couldn't Uncle Reginald tell him to stay away?"

A great deal more was said, but nothing that was said had the slightest effect on Ayala. When she was told of her dependent position, and of the splendour of the prospects offered, she declared that she would rather go into the poor-house than marry her cousin. When she was told that Tom was good-natured, honest, and true, she declared that good-nature, honesty, and truth had nothing to do with it. When she was asked what it was that she looked forward to in the world she could merely sob and say that there was nothing. She could not tell even her sister Lucy of those dreams and castles. How, then, could she explain them to her Aunt Margaret? How could she make her aunt understand that there could be no place in her heart for Tom Tringle seeing that it was to be kept in reserve for some angel of light who would surely make his appearance in due season, – but who must still be there, present to her as her angel of light, even should he never show himself in the flesh. How vain it was to talk of Tom Tringle to her, when she had so visible before her eyes that angel of light with whom she was compelled to compare him!

But, though she could not be brought to say that she would listen patiently to his story, she was nevertheless made to understand that she must see him when he came to her. Aunt Margaret was very full on that subject. A young man who was approved of by the young lady's friends, and who had means at command, was, in Mrs. Dosett's opinion, entitled to a hearing. How otherwise were properly authorised marriages to be made up and arranged? When this was going on there was in some slight degree a diminished sympathy between Ayala and her aunt. Ayala still continued her household duties, – over which, in the privacy of her own room, she groaned sadly; but she continued them in silence. Her aunt, upon whom she had counted, was, she thought, turning against her. Mrs. Dosett, on the other hand, declared to herself that the girl was romantic and silly. Husbands with every immediate comfort, and a prospect of almost unlimited wealth, are not to be found under every hedge. What right could a girl so dependent as Ayala have to refuse an eligible match? She therefore in this way became an advocate on behalf of Tom, – as did also Uncle Reginald, more mildly. Uncle Reginald merely remarked that Tom was attending to his business, which was a great thing in a young man. It was not much, but it showed Ayala that in this matter her uncle was her enemy. In this, her terrible crisis, she had not a friend, unless it might be Lucy.

Then a day was fixed on which Tom was to come, which made the matter more terrible by anticipation. "What can be the good?" Ayala said to her aunt when the hour named for the interview was told her, "as I can tell him everything just as well without his coming at all." But all that had been settled. Aunt Margaret had repeated over and over again that such an excellent young man as Tom, with such admirable intentions, was entitled to a hearing from any young lady. In reply to this Ayala simply made a grimace, which was intended to signify the utter contempt in which she held her cousin Tom with all his wealth.

Tom Tringle, in spite of his rings and a certain dash of vulgarity, which was, perhaps, not altogether his own fault, was not a bad fellow. Having taken it into his heart that he was very much in love he was very much in love. He pictured to himself a happiness of a wholesome cleanly kind. To have the girl as his own, to caress her and foster her, and expend himself in making her happy; to exalt her, so as to have it acknowledged that she was, at any rate, as important as Augusta; to learn something from her, so that he, too, might become romantic, and in some degree poetical; – all this had come home to him in a not ignoble manner. But it had not come home to him that Ayala might probably refuse him. Hitherto Ayala had been very persistent in her refusals; but then hitherto there had existed the opposition of all the family. Now he had overcome that, and he felt therefore that he was entitled to ask and to receive.

On the day fixed, and at the hour fixed, he came in the plenitude of all his rings. Poor Tom! It was a pity that he should have had no one to advise him as to his apparel. Ayala hated his jewelry. She was not quite distinct in her mind as to the raiment which would be worn by the angel of light when he should come, but she was sure that he would not be chiefly conspicuous for heavy gilding; and Tom, moreover, had a waistcoat which would of itself have been suicidal. Such as he was, however, he was shown up into the drawing-room, where he found Ayala alone. It was certainly a misfortune to him that no preliminary conversation was possible. Ayala had been instructed to be there with the express object of listening to an offer of marriage. The work had to be done, – and should be done; but it would not admit of other ordinary courtesies. She was very angry with him, and she looked her anger. Why should she be subjected to this terrible annoyance? He had sense enough to perceive that there was no place for preliminary courtesy, and therefore rushed away at once to the matter in hand. "Ayala!" he exclaimed, coming and standing before her as she sat upon the sofa.

"Tom!" she said, looking boldly up into his face.

"Ayala, I love you better than anything else in the world."

"But what's the good of it?"

"Of course it was different when I told you so before. I meant to stick to it, and I was determined that the governor should give way. But you couldn't know that. Mother and the girls were all against us."

"They weren't against me," said Ayala.

"They were against our being married, and so they squeezed you out as it were. That is why you have been sent to this place. But they understand me now, and know what I am about. They have all given their consent, and the governor has promised to be liberal. When he says a thing he'll do it. There will be lots of money."

"I don't care a bit about money," said Ayala, fiercely.

"No more do I, – except only that it is comfortable. It wouldn't do to marry without money, – would it?"

"It would do very well if anybody cared for anybody." The angel of light generally appeared "in formâ pauperis," though there was always about him a tinge of bright azure which was hardly compatible with the draggle-tailed hue of everyday poverty.

"But an income is a good thing, and the governor will come down like a brick."

"The governor has nothing to do with it. I told you before that it is all nonsense. If you will only go away and say nothing about it I shall always think you very good-natured."

"But I won't go away," said Tom speaking out boldly, "I mean to stick to it. Ayala, I don't believe you understand that I am thoroughly in earnest."

"Why shouldn't I be in earnest, too?"

"But I love you, Ayala. I have set my heart upon it. You don't know how well I love you. I have quite made up my mind about it."

"And I have made up my mind."

"But Ayala – " Now the tenor of his face changed, and something of the look of a despairing lover took the place of that offensive triumph which had at first sat upon his brow. "I don't suppose you care for any other fellow yet."

There was the angel of light. But even though she might be most anxious to explain to him that his suit was altogether impracticable she could say nothing to him about the angel. Though she was sure that the angel would come, she was not certain that she would ever give herself altogether even to the angel. The celestial castle which was ever being built in her imagination was as yet very much complicated. But had it been ever so clear it would have been quite impossible to explain anything of this to her cousin Tom. "That has nothing to do with it," she said.

"If you knew how I love you!" This came from him with a sob, and as he sobbed he went down before her on his knees.

"Don't be a fool, Tom, – pray don't. If you won't get up I shall go away. I must go away. I have heard all that there is to hear. I told them that there is no use in your coming."

"Ayala!" with this there were veritable sobs.

"Then why don't you give it up and let us be good friends."

"I can't give it up. I won't give it up. When a fellow means it as I do he never gives it up. Nothing on earth shall make me give it up. Ayala, you've got to do it, and so I tell you."

"Nobody can make me," said Ayala, nodding her head, but somewhat tamed by the unexpected passion of the young man.

"Then you won't say one kind word to me?"

"I can't say anything kinder."

"Very well. Then I shall go away and come again constantly till you do. I mean to have you. When you come to know how very much I love you I do think you will give way at last." With that he picked himself up from the ground and hurried out of the house without saying another word.

# CHAPTER XII.
# "WOULD YOU?"

The scene described in the last chapter took place in March. For three days afterwards there was quiescence in Kingsbury Crescent. Then there came a letter from Tom to Ayala, very pressing, full of love and resolution, offering to wait any time, – even a month, – if she wished it, but still persisting in his declared intention of marrying her sooner or later; – not by any means a bad letter had there not been about it a little touch of bombast which made it odious to Ayala's sensitive appreciation. To this. Ayala wrote a reply in the following words:

> When I tell you that I won't, you oughtn't to go on. It isn't manly.
> *Ayala.*

> Pray do not write again for I shall never answer another.

Of this she said nothing to Mrs. Dosett, though the arrival of Tom's letter must have been known to that lady. And she posted her own epistle without a word as to what she was doing.

She wrote again and again to Lucy imploring her sister to come to her, urging that as circumstances now were she could not show herself at the house in Queen's Gate. To these Lucy always replied; but she did not reply by coming, and hardly made it intelligible why she did not come. Aunt Emmeline hoped, she said, that Ayala would very soon be able to be at Queen's Gate. Then there was a difficulty about the carriage. No one would walk across with her except Tom; and walking by herself was forbidden. Aunt Emmeline did not like cabs. Then there came a third or fourth letter, in which Lucy was more explanatory, but yet not sufficiently so. During the Easter recess, which would take place in the middle of April, Augusta and Mr. Traffick would be married. The happy couple were to be blessed with a divided honeymoon. The interval between Easter and Whitsuntide would require Mr. Traffick's presence in the House, and the bride with her bridegroom were to return to Queen's Gate. Then they would depart again for the second holidays, and when they were so gone Aunt Emmeline hoped that Ayala would come to them for a visit. "They quite understand," said Lucy, "that it will not do to have you and Augusta together."

This was not at all what Ayala wanted. "It won't at all do to have me and him together," said Ayala to herself, alluding of course to Tom Tringle. But why did not Lucy come over to her? Lucy, who knew so well that her sister did not want to see any one of the Tringles, who must have been sure that any visit to Queen's Gate must have been impossible, ought to have come to her. To whom else could she say a word in her trouble? It was thus that Ayala argued with herself, declaring to herself that she must soon die in her misery, – unless indeed that angel of light might come to her assistance very quickly.

But Lucy had troubles of her own in reference to the family at Queen's Gate, which did, in fact, make it almost impossible to visit her sister for some weeks. Sir Thomas had given an unwilling but a frank consent to his son's marriage, – and then expected simply to be told that it would take place at such and such a time, when money would be required. Lady Tringle had given her consent, – but not quite frankly. She still would fain have forbidden the banns, had any power of forbidding remained in her hands. Augusta was still hot against the marriage, and still resolute to prevent it. That proposed journey upstairs after the scrap-book at Glenbogie, that real journey up to the top of St. Peter's, still rankled in her heart. That Tom should make Ayala a future baronet's wife; that Tom should endow Ayala with the greatest share of the Tringle wealth; that Ayala should become powerful in Queen's Gate, and dominant probably at Merle Park and Glenbogie, – was wormwood to her. She was conscious that Ayala was pretty and witty, though she could affect to despise the wit and the prettiness. By instigating her mother, and by inducing Mr. Traffick to interfere when Mr.

Traffick should be a member of the family, she thought that she might prevail. With her mother she did in part prevail. Her future husband was at present too much engaged with Supply and Demand to be able to give his thoughts to Tom's affairs. But there would soon be a time when he naturally would be compelled to divide his thoughts. Then there was Gertrude. Gertrude's own affairs had not as yet been smiled upon, and the want of smiles she attributed very much to Augusta. Why should Augusta have her way and not she, Gertrude, nor her brother Tom? She therefore leagued herself with Tom, and declared herself quite prepared to receive Ayala into the house. In this way the family was very much divided.

When Lucy first made her petition for the carriage, expressing her desire to see Ayala, both her uncle and her aunt were in the room. Objection was made, – some frivolous objection, – by Lady Tringle, who did not in truth care to maintain much connection between Queen's Gate and the Crescent. Then Sir Thomas, in his burly authoritative way, had said that Ayala had better come to them. That same evening he had settled or intended to settle it with his wife. Let Ayala come as soon as the Trafficks, – as they then would be, – should have gone. To this Lady Tringle had assented, knowing more than her husband as to Ayala's feelings, and thinking that in this way a breach might be made between them. Ayala had been a great trouble to her, and she was beginning to be almost sick of the Dormer connection altogether. It was thus that Lucy was hindered from seeing her sister for six weeks after that first formal declaration of his love made by Tom to Ayala. Tom had still persevered and had forced his way more than once into Ayala's presence, but Ayala's answers had been always the same. "It's a great shame, and you have no right to treat me in this, way."

Then came the Traffick marriage with great éclat. There were no less than four Traffick bridesmaids, all of them no doubt noble, but none of them very young, and Gertrude and Lucy were bridesmaids, – and two of Augusta's friends. Ayala, of course, was not of the party. Tom was gorgeous in his apparel, not in the least depressed by his numerous repulses, quite confident of ultimate success, and proud of his position as a lover with so beautiful a girl. He talked of his affairs to all his friends, and seemed to think that even on this wedding-day his part was as conspicuous as that of his sister, because of his affair with his beautiful cousin. "Augusta doesn't hit it off with her," he said to one of his friends, who asked why Ayala was not at the wedding, – "Augusta is the biggest fool out, you know. She's proud of her husband because he's the son of a lord. I wouldn't change Ayala for the daughter of any duchess in Europe;" – thus showing that he regarded Ayala as being almost his own already. Lord Boardotrade was there, making a semi-jocose speech, quite in the approved way for a cognate paterfamilias. Perhaps there was something of a thorn in this to Sir Thomas, as it had become apparent at last that Mr. Traffick himself did not purpose to add anything from his own resources to the income on which he intended to live with his wife. Lord Boardotrade had been obliged to do so much for his eldest son that there appeared to be nothing left for the member for Port Glasgow. Sir Thomas was prepared with his £120,000, and did not perhaps mind this very much. But a man, when he pays his money, likes to have some return for it, and he did not quite like the tone with which the old nobleman, not possessed of very old standing in the peerage, seemed to imply that he, like a noble old Providence, had enveloped the whole Tringle family in the mantle of his noble blood. He combined the jocose and the paternal in the manner appropriate to such occasions; but there did run through Sir Thomas's mind as he heard him an idea that £120,000 was a sufficient sum to pay, and that it might be necessary to make Mr. Traffick understand that out of the income thenceforth coming he must provide a house for himself and his wife. It had been already arranged that he was to return to Queen's Gate with his wife for the period between Easter and Whitsuntide. It had lately, – quite lately, – been hinted to Sir Thomas that the married pair would run up again after the second holidays. Mr. Septimus Traffick had once spoken of Glenbogie as almost all his own, and Augusta had, in her father's hearing, said a word intended to be very affectionate about "dear Merle Park." Sir Thomas was a father all over, with all a father's feelings; but even a father does not like to be

done. Mr. Traffick, no doubt, was a member of Parliament and son of a peer; – but there might be a question whether even Mr. Traffick had not been purchased at quite his full value.

Nevertheless the marriage was pronounced to have been a success. Immediately after it, – early, indeed, on the following morning, – Sir Thomas inquired when Ayala was coming to Queen's Gate. "Is it necessary that she should come quite at present?" asked Lady Tringle.

"I thought it was all settled," said Sir Thomas, angrily. This had been said in the privacy of his own dressing-room, but downstairs at the breakfast-table, in the presence of Gertrude and Lucy, he returned to the subject. Tom, who did not live in the house, was not there. "I suppose we might as well have Ayala now," he said, addressing himself chiefly to Lucy. "Do you go and manage it with her." There was not a word more said. Sir Thomas did not always have his own way in his family. What man was ever happy enough to do that? But he was seldom directly contradicted. Lady Tringle when the order was given pursed up her lips, and he, had he been observant, might have known that she did not intend to have Ayala if she could help it. But he was not observant, – except as to millions.

When Sir Thomas was gone, Lady Tringle discussed the matter with Lucy. "Of course, my dear," she said, "if we could make dear Ayala happy – "

"I don't think she will come, Aunt Emmeline."

"Not come!" This was not said at all in a voice of anger, but simply as eliciting some further expression of opinion.

"She's afraid of – Tom." Lucy had never hitherto expressed a positive opinion on that matter at Queen's Gate. When Augusta had spoken of Ayala as having run after Tom, Lucy had been indignant, and had declared that the running had been all on the other side. In a side way she had hinted that Ayala, at any rate at present, was far from favourable to Tom's suit. But she had never yet spoken out her mind at Queen's Gate as Ayala had spoken it to her.

"Afraid of him?" said Aunt Emmeline.

"I mean that she is not a bit in love with him, and when a girl is like that I suppose she is – is afraid of a man, if everybody else wants her to marry him."

"Why should everybody want her to marry Tom?" asked Lady Tringle, indignantly. "I am sure I don't want her."

"I suppose it is Uncle Tom, and Aunt Dosett, and Uncle Reginald," said poor Lucy, finding that she had made a mistake.

"I don't see why anybody should want her to marry Tom. Tom is carried away by her baby face, and makes a fool of himself. As to everybody wanting her, I hope she does not flatter herself that there is anything of the kind."

"I only meant that I think she would rather not be brought here, where she would have to see him daily."

After this the loan of the carriage was at last made, and Lucy was allowed to visit her sister at the Crescent. "Has he been there?" was almost the first question that Ayala asked.

"What he do you mean?"

"Isadore Hamel."

"No; I have not seen him since I met him in the Park. But I do not want to talk about Mr. Hamel, Ayala. Mr. Hamel is nothing."

"Oh, Lucy."

"He is nothing. Had he been anything, he has gone, and there would be an end to it. But he is nothing."

"If a man is true he may go, but he will come back." Ayala had her ideas about the angel of light very clearly impressed upon her mind in regard to the conduct of the man, though they were terribly vague as to his personal appearance, his condition of life, his appropriateness for marriage, and many other details of his circumstances. It had also often occurred to her that this angel of light, when he should come, might not be in love with herself, – and that she might have to die simply

because she had seen him and loved him in vain. But he would be a man sure to come back if there were fitting reasons that he should do so. Isadore Hamel was not quite an angel of light, but he was nearly angelic, – at any rate very good, and surely would come back.

"Never mind about Mr. Hamel, Ayala. It is not nice to talk about a man who has never spoken a word."

"Never spoken a word! Oh, Lucy!"

"Mr. Hamel has never spoken a word, and I will not talk about him. There! All my heart is open to you, Ayala. You know that. But I will not talk about Mr. Hamel. Aunt Emmeline wants you to come to Queen's Gate."

"I will not."

"Or rather it is Sir Thomas who wants you to come. I do like Uncle Tom. I do, indeed."

"So do I."

"You ought to come when he asks you."

"Why ought I? That lout would be there, – of course."

"I don't know about his being a lout, Ayala."

"He comes here, and I have to be perfectly brutal to him. You can't guess the sort of things I say to him, and he doesn't mind it a bit. He thinks that he has to go on long enough, and that I must give way at last. If I were to go to Queen's Gate it would be just as much as to say that I had given way."

"Why not?"

"Lucy!"

"Why not? He is not bad. He is honest, and true, and kind-hearted. I know you can't be happy here."

"No."

"Aunt Dosett, with all her affairs, must be trouble to you. I could not bear them patiently. How can you?"

"Because they are better than Tom Tringle. I read somewhere about there being seven houses of the Devil, each one being lower and worse than the other. Tom would be the lowest, – the lowest, – the lowest."

"Ayala, my darling."

"Do not tell me that I ought to marry Tom," said Ayala, almost standing off in anger from the proferred kiss. "Do you think that I could love him?"

"I think you could if you tried, because he is loveable. It is so much to be good, and then he loves you truly. After all, it is something to have everything nice around you. You have not been made to be poor and uncomfortable. I fear that it must be bad with you here."

"It is bad."

"I wish I could have stayed, Ayala. I am more tranquil than you, and could have borne it better."

"It is bad. It is one of the houses, – but not the lowest. I can eat my heart out here, peaceably, and die with a great needle in my hand and a towel in my lap. But if I were to marry him I should kill myself the first hour after I had gone away with him. Things! What would things be with such a monster as that leaning over one? Would you marry him?" In answer to this, Lucy made no immediate reply. "Why don't you say? You want me to marry him. Would you?"

"No."

"Then why should I?"

"I could not try to love him."

"Try! How can a girl try to love any man? It should come because she can't help it, let her try ever so. Trying to love Tom Tringle! Why can't you try?"

"He doesn't want me."

"But if he did? I don't suppose it would make the least difference to him which it was. Would you try if he asked?"

"No."

"Then why should I? Am I so much a poorer creature than you?"

"You are a finer creature. You know that I think so."

"I don't want to be finer. I want to be the same."

"You are free to do as you please. I am not – quite."

"That means Isadore Hamel."

"I try to tell you all the truth, Ayala; but pray do not talk about him even to me. As for you, you are free; and if you could – "

"I can't. I don't know that I am free, as you call it." Then Lucy started, as though about to ask the question which would naturally follow. "You needn't look like that, Lucy. There isn't any one to be named."

"A man not to be named?"

"There isn't a man at all. There isn't anybody. But I may have my own ideas if I please. If I had an Isadore Hamel of my own I could compare Tom or Mr. Traffick, or any other lout to him, and could say how infinitely higher in the order of things was my Isadore than any of them. Though I haven't an Isadore can't I have an image? And can't I make my image brighter, even higher, than Isadore? You won't believe that, of course, and I don't want you to believe it yourself. But you should believe it for me. My image can make Tom Tringle just as horrible to me as Isadore Hamel can make him to you." Thus it was that Ayala endeavoured to explain to her sister something of the castle which she had built in the air, and of the angel of light who inhabited the castle.

Then it was decided between them that Lucy should explain to Aunt Emmeline that Ayala could not make a prolonged stay at Queen's Gate. "But how shall I say it?" asked Lucy.

"Tell her the truth, openly. 'Tom wants to marry Ayala, and Ayala won't have him. Therefore, of course, she can't come, because it would look as though she were going to change her mind, – which she isn't.' Aunt Emmeline will understand that, and will not be a bit sorry. She doesn't want to have me for a daughter-in-law. She had quite enough of me at Rome."

All this time the carriage was waiting, and Lucy was obliged to return before half of all that was necessary had been said. What was to be Ayala's life for the future? How were the sisters to see each other? What was to be done when, at the end of the coming summer, Lucy should be taken first to Glenbogie and then to Merle Park? There is a support in any excitement, though it be in the excitement of sorrow only. At the present moment Ayala was kept alive by the necessity of her battle with Tom Tringle, but how would it be with her when Tom should have given up the fight? Lucy knew, by sad experience, how great might be the tedium of life in Kingsbury Crescent, and knew, also, how unfitted Ayala was to endure it. There seemed to be no prospect of escape in future. "She knows nothing of what I am suffering," said Ayala, "when she gives me the things to do, and tells me of more things, and more, and more! How can there be so many things to be done in such a house as this?" But as Lucy was endeavouring to explain how different were the arrangements in Kingsbury Crescent from those which had prevailed at the bijou, the offended coachman sent up word to say that he didn't think Sir Thomas would like it if the horses were kept out in the rain any longer. Then Lucy hurried down, not having spoken of half the things which were down in her mind on the list for discussion.

# CHAPTER XIII.
# HOW THE TRINGLES FELL INTO TROUBLE

After the Easter holidays the Trafficks came back to Queen's Gate, making a combination of honeymoon and business which did very well for a time. It was understood that it was to be so. During honeymoon times the fashionable married couple is always lodged and generally boarded for nothing. That opening wide of generous hands, which exhibits itself in the joyous enthusiasm of a coming marriage, taking the shape of a houseful of presents, of a gorgeous and ponderous trousseau, of a splendid marriage feast, and not unfrequently of subsidiary presents from the opulent papa, – presents which are subsidiary to the grand substratum of settled dowry, – generously extends itself to luxurious provision for a month or two. That Mr. and Mrs. Traffick should come back to Queen's Gate for the six weeks intervening between Easter and Whitsuntide had been arranged, and arranged also that the use of Merle Park, for the Whitsun holidays, should be allowed to them. This last boon Augusta, with her sweetest kiss, had obtained from her father only two days before the wedding. But when it was suggested, just before the departure to Merle Park, that Mr. Traffick's unnecessary boots might be left at Queen's Gate, because he would come back there, then Sir Thomas, who had thought over the matter, said a word.

It was in this way. "Mamma," said Augusta, "I suppose I can leave a lot of things in the big wardrobe. Jemima says I cannot take them to Merle Park without ever so many extra trunks."

"Certainly, my dear. When anybody occupies the room, they won't want all the wardrobe. I don't know that any one will come this summer."

This was only the thin end of the wedge, and, as Augusta felt, was not introduced successfully. The words spoken seemed to have admitted that a return to Queen's Gate had not been intended. The conversation went no further at the moment, but was recommenced the same evening. "Mamma, I suppose Septimus can leave his things here?"

"Of course, my dear; he can leave anything, – to be taken care of."

"It will be so convenient if we can come back, – just for a few days."

Now, there certainly had been a lack of confidence between the married daughter and her mother as to a new residence. A word had been spoken, and Augusta had said that she supposed they would go to Lord Boardotrade when they left Queen's Gate, just to finish the season. Now, it was known that his lordship, with his four unmarried daughters, lived in a small house in a small street in Mayfair. The locality is no doubt fashionable, but the house was inconvenient. Mr. Traffick, himself, had occupied lodgings near the House of Commons, but these had been given up. "I think you must ask your papa," said Lady Tringle.

"Couldn't you ask him?" said the Honourable Mrs. Traffick. Lady Tringle was driven at last to consent, and then put the question to Sir Thomas, – beginning with the suggestion as to the unnecessary boots.

"I suppose Septimus can leave his things here?"

"Where do they mean to live when they come back to town?" asked Sir Thomas, sharply.

"I suppose it would be convenient if they could come here for a little time," said Lady Tringle.

"And stay till the end of the season, – and then go down to Glenbogie, and then to Merle Park! Where do they mean to live?"

"I think there was a promise about Glenbogie," said Lady Tringle.

"I never made a promise. I heard Traffick say that he would like to have some shooting, – though, as far as I know, he can't hit a haystack. They may come to Glenbogie for two or three weeks, if they like, but they shan't stay here during the entire summer."

"You won't turn your own daughter out, Tom."

"I'll turn Traffick out, and I suppose he'll take his wife with him," said Sir Thomas, thus closing the conversation in wrath.

The Trafficks went and came back, and were admitted into the bed-room with the big wardrobe, and to the dressing-room where the boots were kept. On the very first day of his arrival Mr. Traffick was in the House at four, and remained there till four the next morning, – certain Irish Members having been very eloquent. He was not down when Sir Thomas left the next morning at nine, and was again at the House when Sir Thomas came home to dinner. "How long is it to be?" said Sir Thomas, that night, to his wife. There was a certain tone in his voice which made Lady Tringle feel herself to be ill all over. It must be said, in justice to Sir Thomas, that he did not often use this voice in his domestic circle, though it was well known in Lombard Street. But he used it now, and his wife felt herself to be unwell. "I am not going to put up with it, and he needn't think it."

"Don't destroy poor Augusta's happiness so soon."

"That be d – d," said the father, energetically. "Who's going to destroy her happiness. Her happiness ought to consist in living in her husband's house. What have I given her all that money for?" Then Lady Tringle did not dare to say another word.

It was not till the third day that Sir Thomas and his son-in-law met each other. By that time Sir Thomas had got it into his head that his son-in-law was avoiding him. But on the Saturday there was no House. It was then just the middle of June, – Saturday, June 15, – and Sir Thomas had considered, at the most, that there would be yet nearly two months before Parliament would cease to sit and the time for Glenbogie would come. He had fed his anger warm, and was determined that he would not be done. "Well, Traffick, how are you?" he said, encountering his son-in-law in the hall, and leading him into the dining-room. "I haven't seen you since you've been back."

"I've been in the House morning, noon, and night, pretty near."

"I dare say. I hope you found yourself comfortable at Merle Park."

"A charming house, – quite charming. I don't know whether I shouldn't build the stables a little further from – "

"Very likely. Nothing is so easy as knocking other people's houses about. I hope you'll soon have one to knock about of your own."

"All in good time," said Mr. Traffick, smiling.

Sir Thomas was one of those men who during the course of a successful life have contrived to repress their original roughnesses, and who make a not ineffectual attempt to live after the fashion of those with whom their wealth and successes have thrown them. But among such will occasionally be found one whose roughness does not altogether desert him, and who can on an occasion use it with a purpose. Such a one will occasionally surprise his latter-day associates by the sudden ferocity of his brow, by the hardness of his voice, and by an apparently unaccustomed use of violent words. The man feels that he must fight, and, not having learned the practice of finer weapons, fights in this way. Unskilled with foils or rapier he falls back upon the bludgeon with which his hand has not lost all its old familiarity. Such a one was Sir Thomas Tringle, and a time for such exercise had seemed to him to have come now. There are other men who by the possession of imperturbable serenity seem to be armed equally against rapier and bludgeon, whom there is no wounding with any weapon. Such a one was Mr. Traffick. When he was told of knocking about a house of his own, he quite took the meaning of Sir Thomas's words, and was immediately prepared for the sort of conversation which would follow. "I wish I might; – a Merle Park of my own for instance. If I had gone into the city instead of to Westminster it might have come in my way."

"It seems to me that a good deal has come in your way without very much trouble on your part."

"A seat in the House is a nice thing, – but I work harder I take it than you do, Sir Thomas."

"I never have had a shilling but what I earned. When you leave this where are you and Augusta going to live?"

This was a home question, which would have disconcerted most gentlemen in Mr. Traffick's position, were it not that gentlemen easily disconcerted would hardly find themselves there.

"Where shall we go when we leave this? You were so kind as to say something about Glenbogie when Parliament is up."

"No, I didn't."

"I thought I understood it."

"You said something and I didn't refuse."

"Put it any way you like, Sir Thomas."

"But what do you mean to do before Parliament is up? The long and the short of it is, we didn't expect you to come back after the holidays. I like to be plain. This might go on for ever if I didn't speak out."

"And a very comfortable way of going on it would be." Sir Thomas raised his eyebrows in unaffected surprise, and then again assumed his frown. "Of course I'm thinking of Augusta chiefly."

"Augusta made up her mind no doubt to leave her father's house when she married."

"She shows her affection for her parents by wishing to remain in it. The fact, I suppose, is, you want the rooms."

"But even if we didn't? You're not going to live here for ever, I suppose."

"That, Sir, is too good to be thought of, I fear. The truth is we had an idea of staying at my father's. He spoke of going down to the country and lending us the house. My sisters have made him change his mind and so here we are. Of course we can go into lodgings."

"Or to an hotel."

"Too dear! You see you've made me pay such a sum for insuring my life. I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll let us make it out here till the 10th of July we'll go into an hotel then." Sir Thomas, surprised at his own compliance, did at last give way. "And then we can have a month at Glenbogie from the 12th."

"Three weeks," said Sir Thomas, shouting at the top of his voice.

"Very well; three weeks. If you could have made it the month it would have been convenient; but I hate to be disagreeable." Thus the matter was settled, and Mr. Traffick was altogether well pleased with the arrangement.

"What are we to do?" said Augusta, with a very long face. "What are we to do when we are made to go away?"

"I hope I shall be able to make some of the girls go down by that time, and then we must squeeze in at my father's."

This and other matters made Sir Thomas in those days irritable and disagreeable to the family. "Tom," he said to his wife, "is the biggest fool that ever lived."

"What is the matter with him now?" asked Lady Tringle, who did not like to have her only son abused.

"He's away half his time, and when he does come he'd better be away. If he wants to marry that girl why doesn't he marry her and have done with it?"

Now this was a matter upon which Lady Tringle had ideas of her own which were becoming every day stronger. "I'm sure I should be very sorry to see it," she said.

"Why should you be sorry? Isn't it the best thing a young man can do? If he's set his heart that way all the world won't talk him off. I thought all that was settled."

"You can't make the girl marry him."

"Is that it?" asked Sir Thomas, with a whistle. "You used to say she was setting her cap at him."

"She is one of those girls you don't know what she would be at. She's full of romance and nonsense, and isn't half as fond of telling the truth as she ought to be. She made my life a burden to me while she was with us, and I don't think she would be any better for Tom."

"But he's still determined."

"What's the use of that?" said Lady Tringle.

"Then he shall have her. I made him a promise and I'm not going to give it up. I told him that if he was in earnest he should have her."

"You can't make a girl marry a young man."

"You have her here, and then we'll take her to Glenbogie. Now when I say it I mean it. You go and fetch her, and if you don't I will. I'm not going to have her turned out into the cold in that way."

"She won't come, Tom." Then he turned round and frowned at her.

The immediate result of this was that Lady Tringle herself did drive across to Kingsbury Crescent accompanied by Gertrude and Lucy, and did make her request in form. "My dear, your uncle particularly wants you to come to us for the next month." Mrs. Dosett was sitting by. "I hope Ayala may be allowed to come to us for a month."

"Ayala must answer for herself," said Mrs. Dosett, firmly. There had never been any warm friendship between Mrs. Dosett and her husband's elder sister.

"I can't," said Ayala, shaking her head.

"Why not, my dear?" said Lady Tringle.

"I can't," said Ayala.

Lady Tringle was not in the least offended or annoyed at the refusal. She did not at all desire that Ayala should come to Glenbogie. Ayala at Glenbogie would make her life miserable to her. It would, of course, lead to Tom's marriage, and then there would be internecine fighting between Ayala and Augusta. But it was necessary that she should take back to her husband some reply; – and this reply, if in the form of refusal, must come from Ayala herself. "Your uncle has sent me," said Lady Tringle, "and I must give him some reason. As for expense, you know," – then she turned to Mrs. Dosett with a smile, – "that of course would be our affair."

"If you ask me," said Mrs. Dosett, "I think that as Ayala has come to us she had better remain with us. Of course things are very different, and she would be only discontented." At this Lady Tringle smiled her sweetest smile, – as though acknowledging that things certainly were different, – and then turned to Ayala for a further reply.

"Aunt Emmeline, I can't," said Ayala.

"But why, my dear? Can't isn't a courteous answer to a request that is meant to be kind."

"Speak out, Ayala," said Mrs. Dosett. "There is nobody here but your aunts."

"Because of Tom."

"Tom wouldn't eat you," said Lady Tringle, again smiling.

"It's worse than eating me," said Ayala. "He will go on when I tell him not. If I were down there he'd be doing it always. And then you'd tell me that I – encouraged him!"

Lady Tringle felt this to be unkind and undeserved. Those passages in Rome had been very disagreeable to every one concerned. The girl certainly, as she thought, had been arrogant and impertinent. She had been accepted from charity and had then domineered in the family. She had given herself airs and had gone out into company almost without authority, into company which had rejected her, – Lady Tringle. It had become absolutely necessary to get rid of an inmate so troublesome, so unbearable. The girl had been sent away, – almost ignominiously. Now she, Lady Tringle, the offended aunt, the aunt who had so much cause for offence, had been good enough, gracious enough, to pardon all this, and was again offering the fruition of a portion of her good things to the sinner. No doubt she was not anxious that the offer should be accepted, but not the less was it made graciously, – as she felt herself. In answer to this she had thrown back upon her the only hard word she had ever spoken to the girl! "You wouldn't be told anything of the kind, but you needn't come if you don't like it."

"Then I don't," said Ayala, nodding her head.

"But I did think that after all that has passed, and when I am trying to be kind to you, you would have made yourself more pleasant to me. I can only tell your uncle that you say you won't."

"Give my love to my uncle, and tell him that I am much obliged to him and that I know how good he is; but I can't – because of Tom."

"Tom is too good for you," exclaimed Aunt Emmeline, who could not bear to have her son depreciated even by the girl whom she did not wish to marry him.

"I didn't say he wasn't," said Ayala, bursting into tears. "The Archbishop of Canterbury would be too good for me, but I don't want to marry him." Then she got up and ran out of the room in order that she might weep over her troubles in the privacy of her own chamber. She was thoroughly convinced that she was being ill-used. No one had a right to tell her that any man was too good for her unless she herself should make pretensions to the man. It was an insult to her even to connect her name with that of any man unless she had done something to connect it. In her own estimation her cousin Tom was infinitely beneath her, – worlds beneath her, – a denizen of an altogether inferior race, such as the Beast was to the Beauty! Not that Ayala had ever boasted to herself of her own face or form. It was not in that respect that she likened herself to the Beauty when she thought of Tom as the Beast. Her assumed superiority existed in certain intellectual or rather artistic and æsthetic gifts, – certain celestial gifts. But as she had boasted of them to no one, as she had never said that she and her cousin were poles asunder in their tastes, poles asunder in their feelings, poles asunder in their intelligence, was it not very, very cruel that she should be told, first that she encouraged him, and then that she was not good enough for him? Cinderella did not ask to have the Prince for her husband. When she had her own image of which no one could rob her, and was content with that, why should they treat her in this cruel way?

"I am afraid you are having a great deal of trouble with her," said Lady Tringle to Mrs. Dosett.

"No, indeed. Of course she is romantic, which is very objectionable."

"Quite detestable!" said Lady Tringle.

"But she has been brought up like that, so that it is not her fault. Now she endeavours to do her best."

"She is so upsetting."

"She is angry because her cousin persecutes her."

"Persecutes her, indeed! Tom is in a position to ask any girl to be his wife. He can give her a home of her own, and a good income. She ought to be proud of the offer instead of speaking like that. But nobody wants her to have him."

"He wants it, I suppose."

"Just taken by her baby face; – that's all. It won't last, and she needn't think so. However, I've done my best to be kind, Mrs. Dosett, and there's an end of it. If you please I'll ring the bell for the carriage. Good-bye." After that she swam out of the room and had herself carried back to Queen's Gate.

# CHAPTER XIV.
# FRANK HOUSTON

Three or four days afterwards Sir Thomas asked whether Ayala was to come to Glenbogie. "She positively refused," said his wife, "and was so rude and impertinent that I could not possibly have her now." Then Sir Thomas frowned and turned himself away, and said not a word further on that occasion.

There were many candidates for Glenbogie on this occasion. Among others there was Mr. Frank Houston, whose candidature was not pressed by himself, – as could not well have been done, – but was enforced by Gertrude on his behalf. It was now July. Gertrude and Mr. Houston had seen something of each other in Rome, as may be remembered, and since then had seen a good deal of each other in town. Gertrude was perfectly well aware that Mr. Houston was impecunious; but Augusta had been allowed to have an impecunious lover, and Tom to throw himself at the feet of an impecunious love. Gertrude felt herself to be entitled to her £120,000; did not for a moment doubt but that she would get it. Why shouldn't she give it to any young man she liked as long as he belonged to decent people? Mr. Houston wasn't a Member of Parliament, – but then he was young and good-looking. Mr. Houston wasn't son to a lord, but he was brother to a county squire, and came of a family much older than that of those stupid Boardotrade and Traffick people. And then Frank Houston was very presentable, was not at all bald, and was just the man for a girl to like as a husband. It was dinned into her ears that Houston had no income at all, – just a few hundreds a year on which he never could keep himself out of debt. But he was a generous man, who would be more than contented with the income coming from £120,000. He would not spunge upon the house at Queen's Gate. He would not make use of Merle Park and Glenbogie. He would have a house of his own for his old boots. Four-per-cent. would give them nearly £5,000 a year. Gertrude knew all about it already. They could have a nice house near Queen's Gate; – say somewhere about Onslow Gardens. There would be quite enough for a carriage, for three months upon a mountain in Switzerland, and three more among the art treasures of Italy. It was astonishing how completely Gertrude had it all at her finger's ends when she discussed the matter with her mother. Mr. Houston was a man of no expensive tastes. He didn't want to hunt. He did shoot, no doubt, and perhaps a little shooting at Glenbogie might be nice before they went to Switzerland. In that case two months on the top of the mountain would suffice. But if he was not asked he would never condescend to demand an entry at Glenbogie as a part of his wife's dower. Lady Tringle was thus talked over, though she did think that at least one of her daughters' husbands ought to have an income of his own. There was another point which Gertrude put forward very frankly, and which no doubt had weight with her mother. "Mamma, I mean to have him," she said, when Lady Tringle expressed a doubt.

"But papa?"

"I mean to have him. Papa can scold, of course, if he pleases."

"But where would the income come from if papa did not give it?"

"Of course he'll give it. I've a right to it as much as Augusta." There was something in Gertrude's face as she said this which made her mother think that she would have her way.

But Sir Thomas had hitherto declined. When Frank Houston, after the manner of would-be sons-in-law, had applied to Sir Thomas, Sir Thomas, who already knew all about it, asked after his income, his prospects, and his occupation. Fifty years ago young men used to encounter the misery of such questions, and to live afterwards often in the enjoyment of the stern questioner's money and daughters. But there used in those days to be a bad quarter of an hour while the questions were being asked, and not un-frequently a bad six months afterwards, while the stern questioner was gradually undergoing a softening process under the hands of the females of the family. But the young man of to-day has no bad quarter of an hour. "You are a mercantile old brick, with money and a daughter.

I am a jeunesse dorée, – gilded by blood and fashion, though so utterly impecunious! Let us know your terms. How much is it to be, and then I can say whether we can afford to live upon it." The old brick surrenders himself more readily and speedily to the latter than to the former manner; – but he hardly surrenders himself quite at once. Frank Houston, when inquired into, declared at once, without blushing, that he had no income at all to speak of in reference to matrimonial life. As to family prospects he had none. His elder brother had four blooming boys, and was likely to have more. As for occupation, he was very fond of painting, very fond of art all round, could shoot a little, and was never in want of anything to do as long as he had a book. But for the earning of money he had no turn whatever. He was quite sure of himself that he could never earn a shilling. But then on the other hand he was not extravagant, – which was almost as good as earning. It was almost incredible; but with his means, limited as they were to a few hundreds, he did not owe above a thousand pounds; – a fact which he thought would weigh much with Sir Thomas in regard to his daughter's future happiness.

Sir Thomas gave him a flat refusal. "I think that I may boast that your daughter's happiness is in my charge," said Frank Houston.

"Then she must be unhappy," said Sir Thomas. Houston shrugged his shoulders. "A fool like that has no right to be happy."

"There isn't another man in the world by whom I would allow her to be spoken of like that," said Houston.

"Bother!"

"I regard her as all that is perfect in woman, and you must forgive me if I say that I shall not abandon my suit. I may be allowed, at any rate, to call at the house?"

"Certainly not."

"That is a kind of thing that is never done nowadays; – never," said Houston, shaking his head.

"I suppose my own house is my own."

"Yours and Lady Tringle's, and your daughters', no doubt. At any rate, Sir Thomas, you will think of this again. I am sure you will think of it again. If you find that your daughter's happiness depends upon it – "

"I shall find nothing of the kind. Good morning."

"Good morning, Sir Thomas." Then Mr. Houston, bowing graciously, left the little back room in Lombard Street, and jumping into a cab, had himself taken straight away to Queen's Gate.

"Papa is always like that," said Gertrude. On that day Mrs. Traffick, with all the boots, had taken herself away to the small house in Mayfair, and Gertrude, with her mother, had the house to herself. At the present moment Lady Tringle was elsewhere, so that the young lady was alone with her lover.

"But he comes round, I suppose."

"If he doesn't have too much to eat, – which disagrees with him, – he does. He's always better down at Glenbogie because he's out of doors a good deal, and then he can digest things."

"Then take him down to Glenbogie and let him digest it at once."

"Of course we can't go till the 12th. Perhaps we shall start on the 10th, because the 11th is Sunday. What will you do, Frank?" There had been a whisper of Frank's going to the Tyrol in August, there to join the Mudbury Docimers, who were his far-away cousins. Imogene Docimer was a young lady of marvellous beauty, – not possessed indeed of £120,000, – of whom Gertrude had heard, and was already anxious that her Frank should not go to the Tyrol this year. She was already aware that her Frank had – just an artist's eye for feminine beauty in its various shapes, and thought that in the present condition of things he would be better at Glenbogie than in the Tyrol.

"I am thinking of wandering away somewhere; – perhaps to the Tyrol. The Mudbury Docimers are there. He's a pal of mine, besides being a cousin. Mrs. Docimer is a very nice woman."

"And her sister?"

"A lovely creature. Such a turn of the neck! I've promised to make a study of her back head."

"Come down to Glenbogie," said Gertrude, sternly.

"How can I do that when your governor won't let me enter his house-door even in London?"

"But you're here."

"Well, – yes; – I am here. But he told me not. I don't see how I'm to drive in at the gate at Glenbogie with all my traps, and ask to be shown my room. I have cheek enough for a good deal, my pet."

"I believe you have, Sir; – cheek enough for anything. But mamma must manage it, – mamma and me, between us. Only keep yourself disengaged. You won't go to the Tyrol, – eh?" Then Frank Houston promised that he would not go to the Tyrol as long as there was a chance open that he might be invited to Glenbogie.

"I won't hear of it," said Sir Thomas to his wife. On that occasion his digestion had perhaps failed him a little. "He only wants to get my money."

"But Gertrude has set her heart on it, and nothing will turn her away."

"Why can't she set her heart on some one who has got a decent income. That man hasn't a shilling."

"Nor yet has Mr. Traffick."

"Mr. Traffick has, at any rate, got an occupation. Were it to do again, Mr. Traffick would never see a shilling of my money. By – , those fellows, who haven't got a pound belonging to them, think that they're to live on the fat of the land out of the sweat of the brow of such men as me."

"What is your money for, Tom, but for the children?"

"I know what it's for. I'd sooner build a hospital than give it to an idle fellow like that Houston. When I asked him what he did, he said he was fond of 'picters!'" Sir Thomas would fall back from his usual modes of expression when he was a little excited.

"Of course he hasn't been brought up to work. But he is a gentleman, and I do think he would make our girl happy."

"My money would make him happy, – till he had spent it."

"Tie it up."

"You don't know what you're talking about. How are you to prevent a man from spending his wife's income?"

"At any rate, if you have him down at Glenbogie you can see what sort of a man he is. You don't know him now."

"As much as I wish to."

"That isn't fair to the poor girl. You needn't give your consent to a marriage because he comes to Glenbogie. You have only to say that you won't give the money and then it must be off. They can't take the money from you." His digestion could not have been very bad, for he allowed himself to be persuaded that Houston should be asked to Glenbogie for ten days. This was the letter of invitation; —

> My dear Mr. Houston,
>
> We shall start for Glenbogie on the 10th of next month. Sir Thomas wishes you to join us on the 20th if you can, and stay till the end of the month. We shall be a little crowded at first, and therefore cannot name an earlier day.
>
> I am particularly to warn you that this means nothing more than a simple invitation. I know what passed between you and Sir Thomas, and he hasn't at all changed his mind. I think it right to tell you this. If you like to speak to him again when you are at Glenbogie of course you can.
>
> *Very sincerely yours,*
> *Emmeline Tringle.*

At the same time, or within a post of it, he got another letter, which was as follows; —

> Dearest F,

Papa, you see, hasn't cut up so very rough, after all. You are to be allowed to come and help to slaughter grouse, which will be better than going to that stupid Tyrol. If you want to draw somebody's back head you can do it there. Isn't it a joke papa's giving way like that all in a moment? He gets so fierce sometimes that we think he's going to eat everybody. Then he has to come down, and he gets eaten worse than anybody else.

Of course, as you're asked to Glenbogie, you can come here as often as you like. I shall ride on Thursday and Friday. I shall expect you exactly at six, just under the Memorial. You can't come home to dinner, you know, because he might flare up; but you can turn in at lunch every day you please except Saturday and Sunday. I intend to be so jolly down at Glenbogie. You mustn't be shooting always.

*Ever your own,*

*G.*

Frank Houston as he read this threw himself back on the sofa and gave way to a soft sigh. He knew he was doing his duty, – just as another man does who goes forth from his pleasant home to earn his bread and win his fortune in some dry, comfortless climate, far from the delights to which he has been always accustomed. He must do his duty. He could not live always adding a hundred or two of debt to the burden already round his neck. He must do his duty. As he thought of this he praised himself mightily. How beautiful was his far-away cousin, Imogene Docimer, as she would twist her head round so as to show the turn of her neck! How delightful it would be to talk love to Imogene! As to marrying Imogene, who hadn't quite so many hundreds as himself, that he knew to be impossible. As for marriage, he wasn't quite sure that he wanted to marry any one. Marriage, to his thinking, was "a sort of grind," at the best. A man would have to get up and go to bed with some regularity. His wife might want him to come down in a frock coat to breakfast. His wife would certainly object to his drawing the back heads of other young women. Then he thought of the provocation he had received to draw Gertrude's back head. Gertrude hadn't got any turn of a neck to speak of. Gertrude was a stout, healthy girl; and, having £120,000, was entitled to such a husband as himself. If he waited longer he might be driven to worse before he found the money which was so essentially necessary. He was grateful to Gertrude for not being worse, and was determined to treat her well. But as for love, romance, poetry, art, – all that must for the future be out of the question. Of course, there would now be no difficulty with Sir Thomas, and therefore he must at once make up his mind. He decided that morning, with many soft regrets, that he would go to Glenbogie, and let those dreams of wanderings in the mountains of the Tyrol pass away from him. "Dear, dearest Imogene!" He could have loved Imogene dearly had fates been more propitious. Then he got up and shook himself, made his resolution like a man, ate a large allowance of curried salmon for his breakfast, – and then wrote the following letter. "Duty first!" he said to himself as he sat down to the table like a hero.

## Letter No. 1

Dear Lady Tringle,

So many thanks! Nothing could suit my book so well as a few days at Glenbogie just at the end of August. I will be there, like a book, on the 20th. Of course I understand all that you say. Fathers can't be expected to yield all at once, especially when suitors haven't got very much of their own. I shouldn't have dared to ask hadn't I known myself to be a most moderate man. Of course I shall ask again.

If you will help me, no doubt I shall succeed. I really do think that I am the man to make Gertrude happy.
*Yours, dear Lady Tringle, ever so much,*
*F. Houston.*

## Letter No. 2

My own One,

Your governor is a brick. Of course, Glenbogie will be better than the Tyrol, as you are to be there. Not but what the Tyrol is a very jolly place, and we'll go and see it together some day. Ask Tom to let me know whether one can wear heavy boots in the Glenbogie mountains. They are much the best for the heather; but I have shot generally in Yorkshire, and there they are too hot. What number does he shoot with generally? I fancy the birds are wilder with you than with us.

As for riding, I don't dare to sit upon a horse this weather. Nobody but a woman can stand it. Indeed, now I think of it, I sold my horse last week to pay the fellow I buy paints from. I've got the saddle and bridle, and if I stick them up upon a rail, under the trees, it would be better than any horse while the thermometer is near 80. All the ladies could come round and talk to one so nicely.

I hate lunch, because it makes me red in the face, and nobody will give me my breakfast before eleven at the earliest. But I'll come in about three as often as you like to have me. I think I perhaps shall run over to the Tyrol after Glenbogie. A man must go somewhere when he has been turned out in that fashion. There are so many babies at Buncombe Hall!

– Buncombe Hall is the family seat of the Houstons, —

and I don't like to see my own fate typified before the time.

Can I do anything for you except riding or eating lunch, – which are simply feminine exercises? Always your own,
*Frank.*

## Letter No. 3

Dear Cousin Im,

How pleasant it is that a little strain of thin blood should make the use of that pretty name allowable! What a stupid world it is when the people who like each other best cannot get together because of proprieties, and marriages, and such balderdash as we call love. I do not in the least want to be in love with you, – but I do want to sit near you, and listen to you, and look at you, and to know that the whole air around is impregnated by the mysterious odour of your presence. When one is thoroughly satisfied with a woman there comes a scent as of sweet flowers, which does not reach the senses of those whose feelings are not so awakened.

And now for my news! I suppose that G. T. will in a tremendously short period become Mistress F. H. 'A long day, my Lord.' But, if you are to be hung, better be hung at once. Père Tringle has not consented, – has done just the reverse, – has turned me out of his house, morally. That is, out of his London house. He asked of my 'house and my home,' as they did of Allan-a-Dale.

Queen's Gate and Glenbogie stand fair on the hill.
"My home," quoth bold Houston, "shows gallanter still.
'Tis the garret up three pair – "

Then he told me roughly to get me gone; but 'I had laughed on the lass with my bonny black eye.' So the next day I got an invite to Glenbogie, and at the appropriate time in August,

She'll go to the mountains to hear a love tale,
And the youth —

it will be told by is to be your poor unfortunate coz, Frank Houston. Who's going to whimper? Haven't I known all along what was to come? It has not been my lot in life to see a flower and pick it because I love it. But a good head of cabbage when you're hungry is wholesome food. – Your loving cousin, but not loving as he oughtn't to love,
*Frank Houston.*

I shall still make a dash for the Tyrol when this episode at Glenbogie is over.

# CHAPTER XV.
# AYALA WITH HER FRIENDS

Some few days after Lady Tringle had been at Kingsbury Crescent, two visitors, who knew little or nothing of each other, came to see Ayala. One was a lady and the other a gentleman, and the lady came first. The gentleman, however, arrived before the lady had gone. Mrs. Dosett was present while the lady remained; but when the gentleman came she was invited to leave him alone with her niece, – as shall be told.

The lady was the Marchesa Baldoni. Can the reader go so far back as to remember the Marchesa Baldoni? It was she who rather instigated Ayala to be naughty to the Tringles in Rome, and would have Ayala at her parties when she did not want the Tringles. The Marchesa was herself an Englishwoman, though she had lived at Rome all her life, and had married an Italian nobleman. She was now in London for a few weeks, and still bore in mind her friendship for Ayala, and a certain promise she had once made her. In Rome Lady Tringle, actuated by Augusta, who at the moment was very angry with everybody including her own lover, had quarrelled with the Marchesa. The Marchesa had then told Ayala that she, Ayala, must stay with her aunt, – must, in fact, cease for the time to come to the Marchesa's apartments, because of the quarrel; but that a time would come in which they might again be friends. Soon afterwards the Marchesa had heard that the Tringle family had discarded poor Ayala, – that her own quarrel had, in fact, extended itself to Ayala, and that Ayala had been shunted off to a poor relation, far away from all the wealth and luxuries which she had been allowed to enjoy for so short a time. Therefore, soon after her arrival in London, the Marchesa had made herself acquainted with the address of the Dosetts, and now was in Kingsbury Crescent in fulfilment of her promise made at Rome.

"So now you have got our friend Ayala," said the Marchesa with a smile to Mrs. Dosett.

"Yes; we have her now. There has been a change. Her sister, Lucy, has gone to my husband's sister, Lady Tringle."

The Marchesa made a pleasant little bow at each word. She seemed to Mrs. Dosett to be very gorgeously dressed. She was thoroughly well dressed, and looked like a Marchesa; – or perhaps, even, like a Marchioness. She was a tall, handsome woman, with a smile perhaps a little too continuously sweet, but with a look conscious of her own position behind it. She had seen in a moment of what nature was Ayala, how charming, how attractive, how pretty, how clever, – how completely the very opposite of the Tringles! Ayala learned Italian so readily that she could talk it almost at once. She could sing, and play, and draw. The Marchesa had been quite willing that her own daughter Nina should find a friend in Ayala. Then had come the quarrel. Now she was quite willing to renew the friendship, though Ayala's position was so sadly altered. Mrs. Dosett was almost frightened as the grand lady sat holding Ayala's hand, and patting it. "We used to know her so well in Rome; – did we not, Ayala?"

"You were very kind to me."

"Nina couldn't come, because her father would make her go with him to the pictures. But now, my dear, you must come to us just for a little time. We have a furnished house in Brook Street, near the park, till the end of the season, and we have one small spare room which will just do for you. I hope you will let her come to us, for we really are old friends," said the Marchesa, turning to Mrs. Dosett.

Mrs. Dosett looked black. There are people who always look black when such applications are made to them, – who look black at any allusions to pleasures. And then there came across her mind serious thoughts as to flowers and ribbons, – and then more serious thoughts as to boots, dresses, and hats. Ayala, no doubt, had come there less than six months since with good store of everything; but Mrs. Dosett knew that such a house as would be that of this lady would require a girl to show herself

with the newest sheen on everything. And Ayala knew it too. The Marchesa turned from the blackness of Mrs. Dosett's face with her sweetest smile to Ayala. "Can't we manage it?" said the Marchesa.

"I don't think we can," said Ayala, with a deep sigh.

"And why not?"

Ayala looked furtively round to her aunt. "I suppose I may tell, Aunt Margaret?" she said.

"You may tell everything, my dear," said Mrs. Dosett.

"Because we are poor," said Ayala.

"What does that matter?" said the Marchesa, brightening up. "We want you because you are rich in good gifts and pretty ways."

"But I can't get new frocks now as I used to do in Rome. Aunt Emmeline was cruel to me, and said things which I could not bear. But they let me have everything. Uncle Reginald gives me all that he has, and I am much happier here. But we cannot go out and buy things, – can we, Aunt Margaret?"

"No, my dear; we cannot."

"It does not signify," said the Marchesa. "We are quite quiet, and what you have got will do very well. Frocks! The frocks you had in Rome are good enough for London. I won't have a word of all that. Nina has set her heart upon it, and so has my husband, and so have I. Mrs. Dosett, when we are at home we are the most homely people in the world. We think nothing of dressing. Not to come and see your old friends because of your frocks! We shall send for you the day after to-morrow. Don't you know, Mrs. Dosett, it will do her good to be with her young friend for a few days." Mrs. Dosett had not succeeded in her remonstrances when Sir Thomas Tringle was shown into the room, and then the Marchesa took her leave. For Sir Thomas Tringle was the other visitor who came on that morning to see Ayala.

"If you wouldn't mind, Mrs. Dosett," said Sir Thomas before he sat down, "I should like to see Ayala alone." Mrs. Dosett had not a word to say against such a request, and at once took her leave.

"My dear," he began, coming and sitting opposite to Ayala, with his knees almost touching her, "I have got something very particular to say to you." Ayala was at once much frightened. Her uncle had never before spoken to her in this way, – had never in truth said a word to her seriously. He had always been kind to her, making her presents, and allowing himself to be kissed graciously morning and evening. He had never scolded her, and, better than all, had never said a word to her, one way or the other, about Tom. She had always liked her uncle, because he had never caused her trouble when all the others in his house had been troublesome to her. But now she was afraid of him. He did not frown, but he looked very seriously at her, as he might look, perhaps, when he was counting out all his millions in Lombard Street. "I hope you think that I have always wished to be kind to you, Ayala."

"I am sure you have, Uncle Tom."

"When you had come to us I always wished you to stay. I don't like changes of this sort. I suppose you didn't hit it off with Augusta. But she's gone now."

"Aunt Emmeline said something." That accusation, as to "encouragement," so rankled in her heart, that when she looked back at her grievances among the Tringles that always loomed the largest.

"I don't want to hear anything about it," said Sir Thomas. "Let bygones be bygones. Your aunt, I am sure, never meant unkindly by you. Now, I want you to listen to me."

"I will, Uncle Tom."

"Listen to me to the end, like a good girl."

"I will."

"Your Cousin Tom – ." Ayala gave a visible shudder, and uttered an audible groan, but as yet she did not say a word. Sir Thomas, having seen the shudder, and heard the groan, did frown as he began again. "Your Cousin Tom is most truly attached to you."

"Why won't he leave me alone, then?"

"Ayala, you promised to listen to me without speaking."

"I will, Uncle Tom. Only – "

"Listen to me, and then I will hear anything you have to say."

"I will," said Ayala, screwing up her lips, so that no words should come out of them, let the provocation be what it might.

Sir Thomas began again. "Your Cousin Tom is most truly attached to you. For some time I and his mother disapproved of this. We thought you were both too young, and there were other reasons which I need not now mention. But when I came to see how thoroughly he was in earnest, how he put his heart into it, how the very fact that he loved you had made a man of him; then how the fact that you would not return his love unmanned him, – when I saw all that, I gave my permission." Here he paused, almost as though expecting a word; but Ayala gave an additional turn to the screw on her lips, and remained quite silent. "Yes; we gave our permission, – I and your aunt. Of course, our son's happiness is all in all to us; and I do believe that you are so good that you would make him a good wife."

"But – "

"Listen till I have done, Ayala." Then there was another squeeze. "I suppose you are what they call romantic. Romance, my dear, won't buy bread and butter. Tom is a very good young man, and he loves you most dearly. If you will consent to be his I will make a rich man of him. He will then be a respectable man of business, and will become a partner in the house. You and he can choose a place to live in almost where you please. You can have your own establishment and your carriage, and will be able to do a deal of good. You will make him happy, and you will be my dear child. I have come here to tell you that I will make you welcome into the family, and to promise that I will do everything I can to make you happy. Now you may say what you like; but, Ayala, think a little before you speak."

Ayala thought a little; – not as to what she should say, but as to the words in which she might say it. She was conscious that a great compliment was paid to her. And there was a certain pride in her heart as she thought that this invitation into the family had come to her after that ignominious accusation of encouragement had been made. Augusta had snubbed her about Tom, and her aunt; but now she was asked to come among them, and be one of them, with full observances. She was aware of all this, and aware, also, that such treatment required from her a gracious return. But not on that account could she give herself to the Beast. Not on that account could she be untrue to her image. Not on that account could she rob her bosom of that idea of love which was seated there. Not on that account could she look upon the marriage proposed to her with aught but a shuddering abhorrence. She sat silent for a minute or two, while her heavy eyes were fixed upon his. Then, falling on her knees before him, she put up her little hands to pray to him. "Uncle Tom, I can't," she said. And then the tears came running down her cheeks.

"Why can't you, Ayala? Why cannot you be sensible, as other girls are?" said Sir Thomas, lifting her up, and putting her on his knee.

"I can't," she said. "I don't know how to tell you."

"Do you love some other man?"

"No; no; no!" To Uncle Tom, at any rate, she need say nothing of the image.

"Then why is it?"

"Because I can't. I don't know what to say, but I can't. I know how very, very, very good you are."

"I would love you as my daughter."

"But I can't, Uncle Tom. Pray tell him, and make him get somebody else. He would be quite happy if he could get somebody else."

"It is you that he loves."

"But what's the use of it, when I can't? Dear, dear Uncle Tom, do have it all settled for me. Nothing on earth could ever make me do it. I should die if I were to try."

"That's nonsense."

"I do so want not to make you angry, Uncle Tom. And I do so wish he would be happy with someone else. Nobody ought to be made to marry unless they like it; – ought they?"

"There is no talk of making," said Sir Thomas, frowning.

"At any rate I can't," said Ayala, releasing herself from her uncle's embrace.

It was in vain that even after this he continued his request, begging her to come down to Glenbogie, so that she might make herself used to Tom and his ways. If she could only once more, he thought, be introduced to the luxuries of a rich house, then she would give way. But she would not go to Glenbogie; she would not go to Merle Park; she would not consent to see Tom anywhere. Her uncle told her that she was romantic and foolish, endeavouring to explain to her over and over again that the good things of the world were too good to be thrown away for a dream. At last there was a touch of dignity in the final repetition of her refusal. "I am sorry to make you angry, but I can't, Uncle Tom." Then he frowned with all his power of frowning, and, taking his hat, left the room and the house almost without a word.

At the time fixed the Marchesa's carriage came, and Ayala with her boxes was taken away to Brook Street. Uncle Reginald had offered to do something for her in the way of buying a frock, but this she refused, declaring that she would not allow herself to become an expense merely because her friends in Rome had been kind to her. So she had packed up the best of what she had and started, with her heart in her mouth, fearing the grandeur of the Marchesa's house. On her arrival she was received by Nina, who at once threw herself into all her old intimacy. "Oh, Ayala," she said, "this is so nice to have you again. I have been looking forward to this ever since we left Rome."

"Yes," said Ayala, "it is nice."

"But why did you tell mamma you would not come? What nonsense to talk to her about frocks? Why not come and tell me? You used to have everything at Rome, much more than I had."

Then Ayala began to explain the great difference between Uncle Tom and Uncle Reginald, – how Uncle Tom had so many thousands that nobody could count them, how Uncle Reginald was so shorn in his hundreds that there was hardly enough to supply the necessaries of life. "You see," she said, "when papa died Lucy and I were divided. I got the rich uncle, and Lucy got the poor one; but I made myself disagreeable, and didn't suit, and so we have been changed."

"But why did you make yourself disagreeable?" said Nina, opening her eyes. "I remember when we were at Rome your cousin Augusta was always quarrelling with you. I never quite knew what it was all about."

"It wasn't only that," said Ayala, whispering.

"Did you do anything very bad?"

Then it occurred to Ayala that she might tell the whole story to her friend, and she told it. She explained the nature of that great persecution as to Tom. "And that was the real reason why we were changed," said Ayala, as she completed her story.

"I remember seeing the young man," said Nina.

"He is such a lout!"

"But was he very much in love?" asked Nina.

"Well, I don't know. I suppose he was after his way. I don't think louts like that can be very much in love to signify. Young men when they look like that would do with one girl as well as another."

"I don't see that at all," said Nina.

"I am sure he would if he'd only try. At any rate what's the good of his going on? They can't make a girl marry unless she chooses."

"Won't he be rich?"

"Awfully rich," said Ayala.

"Then I should think about it again," said the young lady from Rome.

"Never," said Ayala, with an impressive whisper. "I will never think about it again. If he were made of diamonds I would not think about it again."

"And is that why you were changed?" said Nina.

"Well, yes. No; it is very hard to explain. Aunt Emmeline told me that – that I encouraged him. I thought I should have rushed out of the house when she said that. Then I had to be changed. I don't know whether they could forgive me, but I could not forgive her."

"And how is it now?"

"It is different now," said Ayala, softly. "Only that it can't make any real difference."

"How different?"

"They'd let me come if I would, I suppose; but I shall never, never go to them any more."

"I suppose you won't tell me everything?" said Nina, after a pause.

"What everything?"

"You won't be angry if I ask?"

"No, I will not be angry."

"I suppose there is someone else you really care for?"

"There is no one," said Ayala, escaping a little from her friend's embrace.

"Then why should you be so determined against that poor young man?"

"Because he is a lout and a beast," said Ayala, jumping up. "I wonder you should ask me; – as if that had anything to do with it. Would you fall in love with a lout because you had no one else? I would rather live for ever all alone, even in Kingsbury Crescent, than have to think of becoming the wife of my cousin Tom." At this Nina shrugged her shoulders, showing that her education in Italy had been less romantic than that accorded to Ayala in London.

# CHAPTER XVI.
# JONATHAN STUBBS

But, though Nina differed somewhat from Ayala as to their ideas as to life in general, they were close friends, and everything was done both by the Marchesa and by her daughter to make Ayala happy. There was not very much of going into grand society, and that difficulty about the dresses solved itself, as do other difficulties. There came a few presents, with entreaties from Ayala that presents of that kind might not be made. But the presents were, of course, accepted, and our girl was as prettily arrayed, if not as richly, as the best around her. At first there was an evening at the opera, and then a theatre, – diversions which are easy. Ayala, after her six dull months in Kingsbury Crescent, found herself well pleased to be taken to easy amusements. The carriage in the park was delightful to her, and delightful a visit which was made to her by Lucy. For the Tringle carriage could be spared for a visit in Brook Street, even though there was still a remembrance in the bosom of Aunt Emmeline of the evil things which had been done by the Marchesa in Rome. Then there came a dance, – which was not so easy. The Marchesa and Nina were going to a dance at Lady Putney's, and arrangements were made that Ayala should be taken. Ayala begged that there might be no arrangements, declared that she would be quite happy to see Nina go forth in her finery. But the Marchesa was a woman who always had her way, and Ayala was taken to Lady Putney's dance without a suspicion on the part of any who saw her that her ball-room apparatus was not all that it ought to be.

Ayala when she entered the room was certainly a little bashful. When in Rome, even in the old days at the bijou, when she did not consider herself to be quite out, she had not been at all bashful. She had been able to enjoy herself entirely, being very fond of dancing, conscious that she could dance well, and always having plenty to say for herself. But now there had settled upon her something of the tedium, something of the silence, of Kingsbury Crescent, and she almost felt that she would not know how to behave herself if she were asked to stand up and dance before all Lady Putney's world. In her first attempt she certainly was not successful. An elderly gentleman was brought up to her, – a gentleman whom she afterwards declared to be a hundred, and who was, in truth, over forty, and with him she manœuvred gently through a quadrille. He asked her two or three questions to which she was able to answer only in monosyllables. Then he ceased his questions, and the manœuvres were carried on in perfect silence. Poor Ayala did not attribute any blame to the man. It was all because she had been six months in Kingsbury Crescent. Of course this aged gentleman, if he wanted to dance, would have a partner chosen for him out of Kingsbury Crescent. Conversation was not to be expected from a gentleman who was made to stand up with Kingsbury Crescent. Any powers of talking that had ever belonged to herself had of course evaporated amidst the gloom of Kingsbury Crescent. After this she was returned speedily to the wings of the Marchesa, and during the next dance sat in undisturbed peace. Then suddenly, when the Marchesa had for a moment left her, and when Nina had just been taken away to join a set, she saw the man of silence coming to her from a distance, with an evident intention of asking her to stand up again. It was in his eye, in his toe, as he came bowing forward. He had evidently learned to suppose that they two outcasts might lessen their miseries by joining them together. She was to dance with him because no one else would ask her! She had plucked up her spirit and resolved that, desolate as she might be, she would not descend so far as that, when, in a moment, another gentleman sprang in, as it were, between her and her enemy, and addressed her with free and easy speech as though he had known her all her life. "You are Ayala Dormer, I am sure," said he. She looked up into his face and nodded her head at him in her own peculiar way. She was quite sure that she had never set her eyes on him before. He was so ugly that she could not have forgotten him. So at least she told herself. He was very, very ugly, but his voice was very pleasant. "I knew you were, and I am Jonathan Stubbs. So now we are introduced, and you are to come and dance with me."

She had heard the name of Jonathan Stubbs. She was sure of that, although she could not at the moment join any facts with the name. "But I don't know you," she said, hesitating. Though he was so ugly he could not but be better than that ancient dancer whom she saw standing at a distance, looking like a dog that has been deprived of his bone.

"Yes, you do," said Jonathan Stubbs, "and if you'll come and dance I'll tell you about it. The Marchesa told me to take you."

"Did she?" said Ayala, getting up, and putting her little hand upon his arm.

"I'll go and fetch her if you like; only she's a long way off, and we shall lose our place. She's my aunt."

"Oh," said Ayala, quite satisfied, – remembering now that she had heard her friend Nina boast of a Colonel cousin, who was supposed to be the youngest Colonel in the British army, who had done some wonderful thing, – taken a new province in India, or marched across Africa, or defended the Turks, – or perhaps conquered them. She knew that he was very brave, – but why was he so very ugly? His hair was ruby red, and very short; and he had a thick red beard: not silky, but bristly, with each bristle almost a dagger, – and his mouth was enormous. His eyes were very bright, and there was a smile about him, partly of fun, partly of good humour. But his mouth! And then that bristling beard! Ayala was half inclined to like him, because he was so completely master of himself, so unlike the unhappy ancient gentleman who was still hovering at a distance. But why was he so ugly? And why was he called Jonathan Stubbs?

"There now," he said, "we can't get in at any of the sets. That's your fault."

"No, it isn't," said Ayala.

"Yes, it is. You wouldn't stand up till you had heard all about me."

"I don't know anything about you now."

"Then come and walk about and I'll tell you. Then we shall be ready for a waltz. Do you waltz well?"

"Do you?"

"I'll back myself against any Englishman, Frenchman, German, or Italian, for a large sum of money. I can't come quite up to the Poles. The fact is, the honester the man is the worse he always dances. Yes; I see what you mean. I must be a rogue. Perhaps I am; – perhaps I'm only an exception. I knew your father."

"Papa!"

"Yes, I did. He was down at Stalham with the Alburys once. That was five years ago, and he told me he had a daughter named Ayala. I didn't quite believe him."

"Why not?"

"It is such an out-of-the-way name."

"It's as good as Jonathan, at any rate." And Ayala again nodded her head.

"There's a prejudice about Jonathan, as there is about Jacob and Jonah. I never could quite tell why. I was going to marry a girl once with a hundred thousand pounds, and she wouldn't have me at last because she couldn't bring her lips to say Jonathan. Do you think she was right?"

"Did she love you?" said Ayala, looking up into his face.

"Awfully! But she couldn't bear the name; so within three months she gave herself and all her money to Mr. Montgomery Talbot de Montpellier. He got drunk, and threw her out of the window before a month was over. That's what comes of going in for sweet names."

"I don't believe a word of it," said Ayala.

"Very well. Didn't Septimus Traffick marry your cousin?"

"Of course he did, about a month ago."

"He is another friend of mine. Why didn't you go to your cousin's marriage?"

"There were reasons," said Ayala.

"I know all about it," said the Colonel. "You quarreled with Augusta down in Scotland, and you don't like poor Traffick because he has got a bald head."

"I believe you're a conjuror," said Ayala.

"And then your cousin was jealous because you went to the top of St. Peter's, and because you would walk with Mr. Traffick on the Pincian. I was in Rome, and saw all about it."

"I won't have anything more to do with you," said Ayala.

"And then you quarreled with one set of uncles and aunts, and now you live with another."

"Your aunt told you that."

"And I know your cousin, Tom Tringle."

"You know Tom?" asked Ayala.

"Yes; he was ever so good to me in Rome about a horse; I like Tom Tringle in spite of his chains. Don't you think, upon the whole, if that young lady had put up with Jonathan she would have done better than marry Montpellier? But now they're going to waltz, come along."

Thereupon Ayala got up and danced with him for the next ten minutes. Again and again before the evening was over she danced with him; and although, in the course of the night, many other partners had offered themselves, and many had been accepted, she felt that Colonel Jonathan Stubbs had certainly been the partner of the evening. Why should he be so hideously ugly? said Ayala to herself, as she wished him good night before she left the room with the Marchesa and Nina.

"What do you think of my nephew?" said the Marchesa, when they were in the carriage together.

"Do tell us what you think of Jonathan?" asked Nina.

"I thought he was very good-natured."

"And very handsome?"

"Nina, don't be foolish. Jonathan is one of the most rising officers in the British service, and luckily he can be that without being beautiful to look at."

"I declare," said Nina, "sometimes, when he is talking, I think him perfectly lovely. The fire comes out of his eyes, and he rubs his old red hairs about till they sparkle. Then he shines all over like a carbuncle, and every word he says makes me die of laughter."

"I laughed too," said Ayala.

"But you didn't think him beautiful," said Nina.

"No, I did not," said Ayala. "I liked him very much, but I thought him very ugly. Was it true about the young lady who married Mr. Montgomery de Montpellier and was thrown out of window a week afterwards?"

"There is one other thing I must tell you about Jonathan," said Nina. "You must not believe a word that he says."

"That I deny," said the Marchesa; "but here we are. And now, girls, get out of the carriage and go up to bed at once."

Ayala, before she went to sleep, and again when she woke in the morning, thought a great deal about her new friend. As to shining like a carbuncle, – perhaps he did, but that was not her idea of manly beauty. And hair ought not to sparkle. She was sure that Colonel Stubbs was very, very ugly. She was almost disposed to think that he was the ugliest man she had ever seen. He certainly was a great deal worse than her cousin Tom, who, after all, was not particularly ugly. But, nevertheless, she would very much rather dance with Colonel Stubbs. She was sure of that, even without reference to Tom's objectionable love-making. Upon the whole she liked dancing with Colonel Stubbs, ugly as he was. Indeed, she liked him very much. She had spent a very pleasant evening because he had been there. "It all depends upon whether any one has anything to say." That was the determination to which she came when she endeavoured to explain to herself how it had come to pass that she had liked dancing with anybody so very hideous. The Angel of Light would of course have plenty to say for himself, and would be something altogether different in appearance. He would be handsome, – or rather, intensely interesting, and his talk would be of other things. He would not say of himself that he

danced as well as though he were a rogue, or declare that a lady had been thrown out of a window the week after she was married. Nothing could be more unlike an Angel of Light than Colonel Stubbs, – unless, perhaps, it were Tom Tringle. Colonel Stubbs, however, was completely unangelic, – so much so that the marvel was that he should yet be so pleasant. She had no horror of Colonel Stubbs at all. She would go anywhere with Colonel Stubbs, and feel herself to be quite safe. She hoped she might meet him again very often. He was, as it were, the Genius of Comedy, without a touch of which life would be very dull. But the Angel of Light must have something tragic in his composition, – must verge, at any rate, on tragedy. Ayala did not know that beautiful description of a "Sallow, sublime, sort of Werther-faced man," but I fear that in creating her Angel of Light she drew a picture in her imagination of a man of that kind.

Days went on, till the last day of Ayala's visit had come, and it was necessary that she should go back to Kingsbury Crescent. It was now August, and everybody was leaving town. The Marchesa and Nina were going to their relations, the Alburys, at Stalham, and could not, of course, take Ayala with them. The Dosetts would remain in town for another month, with a distant hope of being able to run down to Pegwell Bay for a fortnight in September. But even that had not yet been promised. Colonel Stubbs had been more than once at the house in Brook Street, and Ayala had come to know him almost as she might some great tame dog. It was now the afternoon of the last day, and she was sorry because she would not be able to see him again. She was to be taken to the theatre that night, – and then to Kingsbury Crescent and the realms of Lethe early on the following morning.

It was very hot, and they were sitting with the shutters nearly closed, having resolved not to go out, in order that they might be ready for the theatre – when the door was opened and Tom Tringle was announced. Tom Tringle had come to call on his cousin.

"Lady Baldoni," he said, "I hope you won't think me intrusive, but I thought I'd come and see my cousin once whilst she is staying here." The Marchesa bowed, and assured him that he was very welcome. "It's tremendously hot," said Tom.

"Very hot, indeed," said the Marchesa.

"I don't think it's ever so hot as this in Rome," said Nina, fanning herself.

"I find it quite impossible to walk a yard," said Tom, "and therefore I've hired a Hansom cab all to myself. The man goes home and changes his horse regularly when I go to dinner; then he comes for me at ten, and sticks to me till I go to bed. I call that a very good plan." Nina asked him why he didn't drive the cab himself. "That would be a grind," said he, "because it would be so hot all day, and there might be rain at night. Have you read what my brother-in-law, Traffick, said in the House last night, my Lady?"

"I'm afraid I passed it over," said the Marchesa. "Indeed, I am not very good at the debates."

"They are dull," said Tom, "but when it's one's brother-in-law, one does like to look at it. I thought he made that very clear about the malt tax." The Marchesa smiled and bowed.

"What is – malt tax?" asked Nina.

"Well, it means beer," said Tom. "The question is whether the poor man pays it who drinks the beer, or the farmer who grows the malt. It is very interesting when you come to think of it."

"But I fear I never have come to think of it," said the Marchesa.

During all this time Ayala never said a word, but sat looking at her cousin, and remembering how much better Colonel Jonathan Stubbs would have talked if he had been there. Then, after a pause, Tom got up, and took his leave, having to content himself with simply squeezing his cousin's hand as he left the room.

# Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.