

Anthony Trollope – The Critical Heritage
Edited by Donald Smalley

AYALA'S ANGEL
1881

204. Unsigned notice, *Athenaeum*

21 May 1881, p. 686

The main story - that of Ayala - includes several others, all more or less alike, inasmuch as money troubles in each case are the difficulty which makes a story possible. In Ayala's own case there is something more. She has an ideal. That is the explanation of the title of the book. She has formed an idea of perfection, an angel of light, as Mr. Trollope calls him over and over again in his well-known and very pleasant manner. A sort of point and a dash of humour are given to the story by the nature of the man who is ultimately successful.

205. Unsigned notice, *Illustrated London News*

28 May 1881, lxxviii. 526

Not a noble thought, not a striking incident, not a scrap of plot, worthy of the name, is to be found, if it be not rash to make such an assertion, throughout the story. And yet the story has the singular charm of undeniable reality, as regards the sayings, and doings, and correspondence of the various personages; and the style of writing is pleasant, chatty, sprightly, amusing; though the tone may awaken reminiscences of Houndsditch.

206. Unsigned notice, *Saturday Review*

11 June 1881, li. 756-7

Ayala is pretty and fascinating, no doubt; she tempts her suitor on by the unpleasant surprises she prepares for him when he believes himself tolerably sure of a gracious reception. But we agree with the Colonel's good friend and cousin Lady Albury, that Miss Dormer hardly deserves the trouble she causes him. She is no Lily Dale or Grace Crawley. So far as we can see, there is little in her. She has perversity and fits of obstinacy, but no real decision of character; while the Colonel is perhaps as masterly a male character as Mr. Trollope has drawn in any recent book. He is the sort of good fellow who seems to be born to go through the world with the regard of all whose regard is worth having. Like Thackeray's Dobbin in *Vanity Fair*, he gradually impresses you with a sense of his power as well as of his sterling worth

We shall only add that, in our opinion, Mr. Trollope has never showed to more advantage than in those dialogues which he generally succeeds in making extraordinarily lifelike.

207. Unsigned notice, *Spectator*

18 June 1881, liv. 804-5

Mr. Trollope is undoubtedly an adept at describing society in its everyday life. He reveals the motives of the most trivial actions. . . . By dint of subtle appreciation of character and of these arts, which must surely result from unusual quickness in feeling the social pulse, he accomplishes a feat that no less able writer could perform, and takes his readers pleasantly through three volumes, without the usual aids of plot and incident; the thread of story in *Ayala's Angel* is too slight to be called a plot, yet the book is amusing, in spite of that deficiency.

208. Unsigned notice, *The Times*

16 July 1881, p. 5

The heroine herself is shallow, although both pretty and fascinating; and everybody about her is either assiduously set upon pleasure or absorbed in making a creditable appearance on very inadequate means. Nor has 'Ayala's Angel,' although a purely ideal being, anything to do with the world of spirits. The angel is, in reality, a gentleman 'in the clouds,' whom a romantically-minded young woman dreams one day of marrying. She has gifted this bright vision of her fancy with perfections that should make him something more than a demigod, and in the meantime is expecting his appearance with more or less impatience. Ayala has more and far better proposals than fall to the lot of most portionless girls; but among the very different rivals who lay their fortunes at her feet, nobody can by possibility be mistaken for the angel. Indeed, in presenting to us the three most prominent competitors, Mr. Trollope's nervous portraits verge upon caricature. Captain Batsby is preternaturally dull and uninteresting; Mr. Thomas Tringle is preternaturally vulgar; and Colonel Jonathan Stubbs is preternaturally ugly. We foresee from the first that Colonel Stubbs is destined to be the happy man; and although we have serious doubts whether Ayala will prove worthy of him, we are persuaded that she cannot possibly do better for herself. Stubbs must rank among Mr. Trollope's best male studies, although he has rather been dashed in roughly than finished in detail. ...

The novel, as we have said, in spite of some of the leading characters being caricatured, is a very good one; but it is a pity that Mr. Trollope should have gratuitously encumbered his plot with episodes and people which have nothing to do with it.