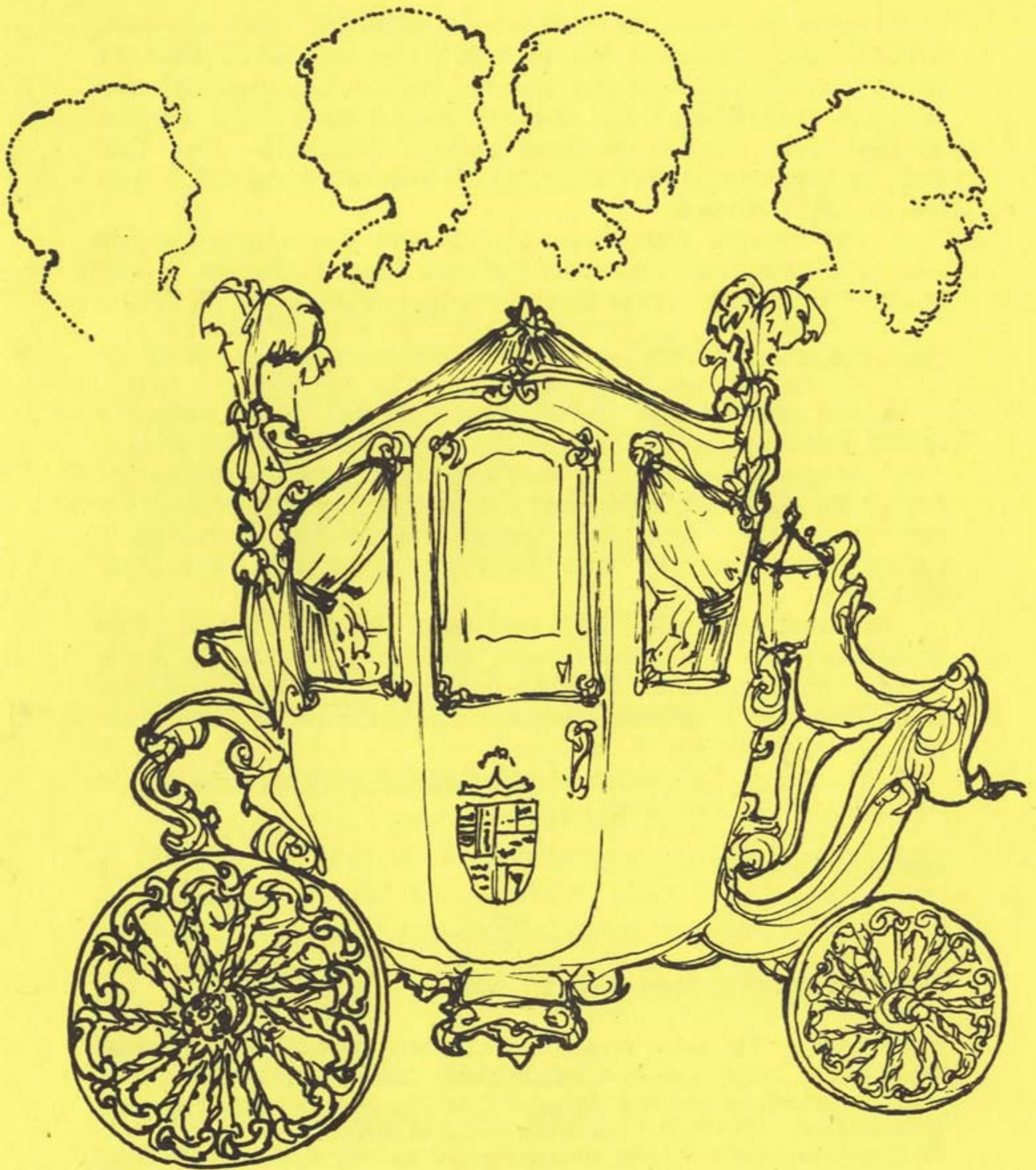


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As Played Before His Highness



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Editor's Note: In KALKI 28 we reprinted the first story of Cabell's to see professional publication, "An Amateur Ghost." His first story to be *accepted*, however, was the second to appear in print (*The Smart Set*, March 1902), and we present it to you now. A revised version of "As Played Before His Highness" was incorporated into GALLANTRY (1907), as "The Ducal Audience." Comments on the differences between the two versions follow the story.

"The idea," said the baroness, "is preposterous!"

"Admirably put!" cried the grand duke. "We will execute it tonight."

The baroness stared at him coldly, and added:

"Besides, one could only take a portmanteau."

"They hold very little," his highness agreed; "I assure you, after I had packed my coronet there was hardly room for a change of linen. And I had to choose between my family tree and a tooth-brush."

"Louis, Louis," sighed the baroness, "can you never be serious? You are about to throw away a duchy, and you laugh like a school-boy."

"*Ma foi!*" retorted the grand duke, looking out on the moonlit gardens, "as a loyal Noumarian, I rejoice at the good fortune that is to befall my country. Morality demands my abdication," he added, virtuously, "and for once I agree with morality."

The Baroness von Altenburg was not disposed to argue the point; for she with the rest of the world knew that the Grand Duke of Noumaria had in his time left little undone that tended to jeopardize both his dignity and his grand duchy. His latest scheme, however, threatened to dispense with both.

It was Homeric in its simplicity. To elucidate it he had led the baroness to the Summer-house that good Duke Ludwig erected in the Gardens of Breschau, close to the fountain of the Naiads, and had in a few words explained his plan. There were post-horses in Noumaria; there was an entirely unobstructed road that led to Vienna, and thence to the world outside; and he proposed, in short, to quiet the grumbling of the discontented Noumarians by the sudden and complete disappearance of their grand duke. As a patriot, the baroness could not fail to perceive the inestimable benefit that would thus be conferred on her country.

He stipulated, however, that his exit from public life should be made in company with this the latest lady on whom he had bestowed his somewhat fickle affections. Remembering these things, the baroness, without exactly encouraging or discouraging his scheme, was at least not prone to insist on his morality.

She contented herself with a truism. "Indeed, your highness, the example you set your subjects is bad."

"Yet they protest," said the grand duke. "I have done the things I ought not to have done, and left unread the papers I have signed. What more can one ask of a grand duke?"

"You are indolent," remonstrated the lady.

"You are adorable," said his highness.

"And that injures your popularity."

"Which vanished with my waist."

"You create scandals."

"The woman tempted me," quoted the grand duke, and added, reflectively, "It is singular—"

"I am afraid," said the baroness, "it is plural."

The grand duke waved a dignified dissent, and continued:

"—that I could never resist green eyes of a peculiar shade."

The baroness, becoming vastly interested in the structure of her fan, went on, with some severity:

"Your reputation—"

"*De mortuis*—" pleaded the grand duke.

"—is bad; and you go from bad to worse."

"By no means," said his highness; "when I was nineteen—"

"I won't believe it of you!" cried the lady.

"I assure you," protested his highness, gravely, "I was a devil of a fellow! She was only twenty, and she had brown eyes."

"By this time," said the lady, spitefully, "she may have grandchildren."

"I am thirty-five!" said the grand duke, with dignity.

"Then the Almanach de Gotha—"

"'Tis a misprint!" cried the grand duke. "I will explain it in Vienna."

"I am not going to Vienna."

"'And Sapphira,'" murmured his highness, "'fell down straight-way at his feet, and yielded up the ghost.' Beware, Amalia!"

"I am not afraid, your highness."

"Nor I. Let Europe frown and journalists moralize, while I go straight on the road that leads to Vienna and heaven."

"Or—" suggested the baroness helpfully.

"There is no 'or.' Once out of Noumaria, we leave all things save happiness behind."

"Among these things, your highness, is a duchy."

"*Hein?*" said the grand duke; "what is it? A black-spot on the map, a pawn in the game of politics. I give up the pawn and take—the queen."

"That is unwise," said the baroness, with composure; "and besides, you are hurting my hand. Apropos of the queen—the grand duchess—"

"Will thank God heartily for her deliverance. She will renounce me before the world, and—almost—love me in secret."

"A true woman," said the baroness, oracularly, "will follow a husband—"

"Till his wife makes her stop," said the grand duke, his tone implying that he knew whereof he spoke.

"If the grand duchess loved you—"

"I don't think she should ever mention it," said the grand duke, turning this new idea over in his mind. "She has a great regard for appearances."

"Nevertheless—"

"She will be regent," chuckled the grand duke. "I can see her now—Marie Antoinette, with a dash of Boadicea. Noumaria will be a temple of all the virtues. Charles will be brought up on moral

aphorisms and health-foods, with me a forcible example of what to avoid. Deuce take it, Amalia," he added, "a father must furnish an example to his children!"

"Pray," asked the baroness, "do you owe it to the prince to take this trip to Vienna?"

"*Ma foi!*" retorted the grand duke, "I owe that to myself."

"It will break the grand duchess's heart."

"Indeed!" observed his highness. "You seem strangely in the confidence of my wife."

The baroness descended to aphorism.

"All women are alike, your highness."

"I have heard," said the grand duke, "that seven devils were cast out of Magdalene."

"Which means—?"

"I have never heard of this being done to any other woman."

"Beware, your highness, of the crudeness of cynicism!"

"I am old," complained the grand duke, "and one reaches years of indiscretion early in life."

"You admit, then, that discretion is desirable?"

"I admit that," said his highness, with firmness, "of you alone."

"Am I, then," queried the baroness, "desirable?"

"More than that," said the grand duke, "you are dangerous. You are a menace to the peace of my court. The young men make sonnets to your eyes and the ladies are ready to tear them out. You corrupt us. There is Châteauroux, now—"

"I assure you," protested the baroness, "he is not the sort of a person to—"

"At twenty-five," interrupted the grand duke, "one is always that sort of a person. Besides, he makes verses."

"Not like yours, your highness. In that line you need fear no rival."

"You confess, then," interrogated the grand duke, "that I have no rival?"

"I said in that line, your highness."

His highness frowned.

"At least," he reflected, "my lines are cast in pleasant places; but I had rather make love to you than verses."

"It is difficult," agreed the baroness, "to do both convincingly; and you were born a poet."

"I was not consulted," cried the grand duke; "and in time one

may live down an epic. Besides, my verses are destined to oblivion. Had I been driven by hunger rather than *ennui*—who knows? As it is, my verses are unread just as my proclamations are unreadable.”

“Phrases, your highness.”

“Phrases or not, it is decided. You shall make no more bad poets.”

“You will,” said the baroness, “put me to a vast expense for curl-papers.”

“You shall create no more heartburnings.”

“My milliner will be inconsolable.”

“In short, you must leave Noumaria.”

“You will break my heart.”

“As misery loves company, I will go with you. We should never forget,” added his highness with considerable kindness, “always to temper justice with mercy.”

“You will do no such thing!”

“I have ordered a carriage to be ready at dawn.”

“I trust your highness will enjoy your drive.”

“In good company,” said the grand duke, “anything is endurable.”

The baroness reflected; the grand duke smiled.

“I will not go,” she said.

“Remember Sapphira,” said the grand duke, “and by no means forget the portmanteau.”

“I have no intention of going,” reiterated the baroness, firmly.

“I would never suspect you of such a thing. Still a portmanteau, in case of emergency—”

“But—”

“Exactly.”

“I am told the sunrise is very beautiful from the Gardens of Breschau.”

“It is well worth seeing,” agreed the grand duke, “on certain days—Thursday, for instance. The gardeners make a specialty of them on Thursdays.”

“By a curious chance,” murmured the baroness, “this is Wednesday.”

“Indeed!” said the grand duke; “I believe it is.”

“And I shall be here on your highness’ recommendation; but only,” she added, “to see the sunrise.”

"Of course," said the grand duke, "to see the sunrise—with a portmanteau!"

The baroness was silent.

"With a portmanteau," entreated the grand duke. "I am a connoisseur of portmanteaux. Say that I may see yours."

The baroness smiled.

"Say yes, Amalia," whispered the grand duke. "I adore portmanteaux."

The baroness bent toward him and said:

"I am sorry to inform your highness that there is someone at the door of the Summer-house."

II

Inasmuch as all Noumaria knew that the grand duke, once closeted with the lady whom he delighted to honor, did not love intrusions; inasmuch as a discreet court had learned to regard the Summer-house as sacred to his highness and the Baroness von Altenburg—for these reasons the grand duke was inclined to resent this disturbance of his privacy as he peered out into the gardens.

His countenance was less severe as he turned again to the baroness; it smacked more of bewilderment.

"It is only the grand duchess," he said.

"And the Comte de Chateauroux," said the baroness.

"Precisely," said the grand duke.

There was no impropriety in the situation, but there is no denying that their voices were somewhat lowered. The rather severely classic beauty of the grand duchess was plainly visible from where they sat. With the Comte de Chateauroux, whose uniform of the Cuirassiers glittered in the moonlight, she made an undeniably handsome picture. It was possibly the grand duke's esthetic taste that held him immovable for a moment.

"After all—" he began, and rose.

"I am afraid that the grand duchess—" murmured the baroness.

"It is the duty of a good husband," said the grand duke, "to conceal from his wife any knowledge that may cause her pain."

Thereupon he sat down.

"I do not," said the baroness, "approve of eavesdropping."

"If you put it that way—" agreed the grand duke, and rose once more, when the voice of Chateauroux stopped him.

"My God!" he cried, "I can't and won't give you up, Victoria!"

"I have heard," said his highness, "that the moonlight is bad for the eyes." Saying this, he seated himself composedly in the darkest corner of the Summer-house.

"This is madness!" cried the grand duchess; "sheer madness!"

"Madness, if you will," persisted Chateauroux, "but a madness too strong for us to resist. Listen, Victoria," and he waved his hand toward the palace, whence music, softened by the distance, stole through the lighted windows; "don't you remember? They used to play that at Godesberg."

The grand duchess was silent.

"Ah, dear heart," he continued, "those were happy times, were they not, when we were boy and girl together? I have danced that so many times with you! It brings back so many things—the scent of your hair, the soft cheek that sometimes brushed mine, the white shoulders that I longed to kiss so many times before I dared."

"*Hein?*" muttered the grand duke.

"We aren't boy and girl now," said the grand duchess, and her voice was regretful. "All that lies behind us, dear. It was a dream—a foolish dream that we must forget."

"Can you forget?" whispered Chateauroux; "can you forget it all, Victoria?—that night at Ingolstadt, when you told me that you loved me; that day at Godesberg when we were lost in the palace gardens?"

"*Mon Dieu*, what a memory!" murmured the grand duke. "He makes love by the almanac."

"Ah, dearest woman in the world," continued Chateauroux, "you loved me once, and you have not quite forgotten, I know. We were happy then—ah, so happy—and now—"

"Life," said the grand duchess, "cannot always be happy."

"Ah, no, dear heart! But what a life has been this of mine—a life of dreary days, filled with sick, vivid dreams of our youth that is hardly past as yet! And so many dreams, woman of my heart! The least remembered trifle brings back in a flash some corner of the old castle and you as I saw you there—laughing, or insolent, or it may be tender, though the latter comes but seldom. Just for a moment I see you and my blood leaps up in homage to my dear lady. Then—ah, the vision disappears quickly as it came, and I hunger more than ever for the sight of your loved face."

"This," said the grand duke, "is insanity."

"But," went on Chateauroux, more softly, "I love better the dreams of the night. They are not made all of memories, sweetheart; rather they are romances that my love weaves out of many memories of you—wild, fantastic stories of just you and me that always end happily if I am let to dream them out in comfort. For there is a woman in these dreams who loves me, whose heart and body and soul are mine, all mine. It is a wonderful vision while it lasts, though it is only in dreams that I am master of my heart's desire, and the waking is very bitter. Ah, Victoria, have pity! Don't let it be only a dream!"

"Not but what he does it rather well, you know," whispered the grand duke to the baroness, "though his style is a trifle florid. That last speech was quite in my earlier manner."

The grand duchess did not stir as Chateauroux bent over her jeweled hand.

"Come, dear love!" he said. "Don't let us lose our only chance of happiness. You will go?"

"I cannot," whispered the grand duchess, "I cannot, dear. We have our work to do in the world."

"You will go?" said Chateauroux again.

"My husband—"

"A man who leaves you for each new caprice, who flaunts his mistresses in the face of Europe."

"My children—"

"Dear God! are they or aught else to stand in my way, think you? You love me!"

"It would be criminal."

"You love me!"

"You act a dishonorable part, Chateauroux."

"You love me!"

"I will never see you again," said the grand duchess, firmly. "Go! I loathe you, I loathe you, monsieur, even more than I loathe myself for stopping to listen to you."

"You love me!" said Chateauroux and took her in his arms.

Then it was granted to the Baroness von Altenburg and the Grand Duke of Noumaria to behold a wonderful sight, for the grand duchess rested her head on his shoulder and said:

"Yes, dear, better than all else beside."

"Really," said the grand duke, "I would never have thought it of Victoria."

"You will come, then?" said Chateauroux.

And the grand duchess answered, quietly:

"It shall be as you say."

Then, while the grand duke and the baroness craned their necks, Chateauroux bent over her upturned lips; but the grand duchess struggles away from him, saying, hurriedly:

"Hush, Philippe! I heard someone—something stirring."

"It was the wind, dear heart."

"Come—I am afraid—it is madness to wait here."

"At dawn, then—in the gardens?"

"Yes, dear. But come, Philippe. I dare not wait." And they disappeared in the direction of the palace.

III

The grand duke looked dispassionately on their retreating figures; inquiringly on the baroness; reprovably on the moon, as if he rather suspected it of having treated him with injustice.

"*Ma foi*," said his highness at length, "I have never known such a passion for sunrises. We shall have them advertised shortly as 'Patronized by the Nobility.'"

"Indeed," said the baroness, "I think we shall"; and added, "her own cousin, too."

"Victoria," observed the grand duke, "has always had the highest regard for her family; but she is going too far."

"Yes," said the baroness; "as far as Vienna."

"She has taken leave of her senses."

"I am much afraid," sighed the baroness, "that she has taken leave of her husband."

"I never dreamed of Victoria—" began the grand duke.

"Precisely," interrupted the baroness; "you never dreamed of Victoria; and it seems that Chateauroux did."

"I shall tell her that there are limits. Yes," repeated the grand duke, emphatically, "that there are limits."

"If I am not mistaken, she will reply that there are—baronesses."

"I shall appeal to her better nature."

"You will find it," said the baroness, "strangely hard of hearing."

"I shall have Chateauroux arrested."

"On what grounds, your highness?"

"In fact," admitted the grand duke, "we do not want a scandal."

"It is not," said the baroness, "altogether a question of what we want."

"There will be a horrible one."

"The papers will thrive on it."

"International complications."

"The army has very little to do."

"A divorce."

"The lawyers will call you blessed. At least," added the baroness baroness, conscientiously, "your lawyers will. I am afraid that hers—"

"Will not be so courteous?" queried the grand duke.

"It is possible," admitted the baroness, "that they may discover some other adjective."

"In short," his highness summed it up, "there will be the deuce to pay."

"Precisely," said the baroness.

The grand duke lost his temper. "If she goes," he thundered, "I'll be—"

"You will be," said the baroness, hastily, "whether she goes or not; and she will go."

"You forget," said his highness, recovering his ruffled dignity, "that I am the grand duke."

"You forget," retorted the baroness, "that Chateauroux is twenty-five."

"I must stop them," said the grand duke.

"It will be difficult," said the lady.

"Without scandal."

"It will be impossible."

The grand duke frowned, and lapsed into a most unducal sullenness.

"Your highness," murmured the baroness, "I cannot express my sympathy for you."

"Madame," said the grand duke, "I cannot express my sympathy for myself. At least, not in the presence of a lady."

"But I have a plan."

"I," said the grand duke, "have any number of plans; but Chateauroux has a carriage; and Victoria," he added, reflectively, "has the deuce of a temper."

"My plan," said the baroness, "is a good one."

"It needs to be," said the grand duke.

Thereupon, the Baroness von Altenburg unfolded to his highness her scheme for preserving peace in the reigning family of Noumaria; and the grand duke heard and marveled.

"Amalia," he said, when she had ended, "you should be prime minister—"

"Ah, your highness," said the lady, "you flatter me."

"—though, indeed," reflected the grand duke, "what would a mere prime minister do with lips like yours?"

"You agree, then, to my plan?" the baroness questioned.

"*Ma foi*, yes!" said the grand duke. "In the gardens, at dawn."

"At dawn," said the baroness, "in the gardens."

IV

The grand duke glanced discontentedly over the scene; in the gray light that heralded the day he found the world a strangely cheerless place. The Gardens of Breschau were deserted, save for a traveling carriage that stood not a hundred yards from the Summer-house.

"It seems," he said, "that I am the first on the ground, and that Chateauroux is a dilatory lover. Young men degenerate."

Saying this, he seated himself on a convenient bench, where Chateauroux found him a few minutes later, smoking a contemplative cigarette, and promptly dropped a portmanteau at the ducal feet.

"Monsieur le comte," said the grand duke, "this is an unforeseen pleasure."

"Your highness!" cried Chateauroux, in astonishment.

"Precisely," said the grand duke.

Chateauroux caressed his chin reflectively. The grand duke inhaled his cigarette in an equally meditative fashion.

"I did not know," said the grand duke, "that you were such an early riser. Or perhaps," he continued, "you are late in retiring. Fie, fie, monsieur, you must be careful! You will create a scandal in our court." He shook his finger knowingly at Chateauroux.

"Your highness—" said the latter, and stammered into silence.

"You said that before, you know," remarked the grand duke.

"An affair of business—"

"Ah," said the grand duke, casting his eye first on the portmanteau and then on the carriage, "can it be that you are leaving Noumaria? We shall miss you, comte."

"I was summoned very hastily, or I should have paid my respects to your highness."

"Indeed," said the grand duke, "it is somewhat sudden."

"It is imperative, your highness."

"And yet," pursued the grand duke, "travel is beneficial to young men."

"I shall not go far, your highness."

"I would not for the world intrude on your secrets, comte—"

"My estates, your highness—"

"—for young men will be young men, I know."

"My steward, your highness, is imperative."

"Stewards are," agreed the grand duke, "somewhat unreasonable at times. I trust she is handsome."

"Ah, your highness!" cried Chateauroux.

"And you have my blessing. Go in peace."

The grand duke was smiling benevolently on the discomfited Chateauroux when the Baroness von Altenburg suddenly appeared between them, in traveling costume and carrying a portmanteau.

"Heyday!" said the grand duke; "it seems that the steward of our good baroness is also importunate."

"Your highness!" cried the baroness, and dropped her portmanteau.

"Everyone," said the grand duke, "appears to doubt my identity this morning."

Chateauroux turned from the one to the other in bewilderment.

"This," said the grand duke, after a pause, "is painful. It is unworthy of you, Chateauroux."

"Your highness!" cried the latter.

"Again?" said the grand duke, pettishly.

The baroness applied her handkerchief to her eyes, and said plaintively:

"You do not understand, your highness."

"I am afraid," said the grand duke, "that I understand only too clearly."

"We will not deceive you—" cried the baroness.

"It would be unwise," agreed the grand duke, "to attempt it."

"—and I confess that I was here to meet Monsieur de Chateauroux."

"Good God!" cried the latter.

"Precisely," observed the grand duke; "to compare portmanteaux;

and you have selected the interior of this carriage, no doubt, as a suitable spot."

"And I admit to your highness—"

"His highness already knowing," interpolated the grand duke.

"That we were about to elope."

"I assure you—" began Chateauroux.

"I will take the lady's word for it," said the grand duke, "though it grieves me."

"We knew you would never give your consent," murmured the baroness.

"Undoubtedly," said the grand duke, "I would never have given my consent."

"And we love each other."

"Fiddle-de-dee!" said his highness.

Chateauroux passed his hand over his brow. "This," he said, "is some horrible mistake."

"It is," assented the grand duke; "a mistake—but one of your making."

"I did not expect the baroness—"

"So early?" continued his highness, sympathetically. "It was unfortunate."

"Indeed, your highness—" began Chateauroux.

"Do you deny, Monsieur le comte," asked the grand duke, coldly, "that you were awaiting a lady?"

Chateauroux was silent.

"Or perhaps," suggested the grand duke, "it was someone else you were expecting."

Still silence.

"Ah, Philippe!" entreated the baroness, "confess to his highness."

"If I do—" said Chateauroux.

"Stop, sir!" said the grand duke, "you have already brought scandal to our court. Do not add profanity to your other crimes. I protest," he continued, "even the grand duchess has heard of it."

Indeed, the grand duchess, hurrying from the palace, was already within a few feet of the trio, and had only then perceived her husband's presence.

"I should not be surprised," said the grand duke, raising his eyes to heaven, "if it were all over the palace by this time."

Then, as the grand duchess paused in astonishment, he asked, gravely:

"You, too, have heard of this sad affair, Victoria?"

"Your highness!" cried the grand duchess.

"Of what these two young fools have planned? Ah, I see you have, and come in haste to prevent it. You have a good heart, Victoria."

"I did not know—" began the grand duchess.

"Until the last moment," finished the grand duke. "I understand. But perhaps," he continued hopefully, "it is not yet too late to bring them to their senses."

Turning to the baroness and Chateauroux, he said:

"I will not stop you, but—"

"Believe me," said the baroness, "we are heartily grateful for your highness's magnanimity. We may, then, depart with your permission?"

"But I beg you to reflect—"

"We have reflected," said the baroness; and handed her port-manteau to the unwilling Chateauroux.

"To you," said the highness, frowning on Chateauroux, "I have nothing to say. Under the cover of hospitality you have endeavored to steal away the fairest ornament of our court; I leave you to the pangs of conscience, if indeed you have a conscience. But the baroness is young; she has been misled by your sophistry and specious pretense of affection. She has evidently been misled," he said kindly, to the grand duchess, "as any woman might be."

"As any woman might be!" echoed the grand duchess.

"I shall therefore," continued the grand duke, "do all in my power to dissuade her from the ruinous step. I shall appeal to her better nature, and not, I trust, in vain."

He hurried to the carriage, where the baroness had seated herself.

"Amalia," he whispered, "you are an admirable actress."

The baroness smiled.

"It is now time," said his highness, "for me to appeal to your better nature. I shall do so in a loud voice, for I have prepared a most virtuous homily that I am unwilling the grand duchess should miss. You will be overcome with remorse, burst into tears, throw yourself at my feet—remember that the left is the gouty one—and be forgiven. You will then be restored to favor, while Chateauroux drives off alone in disgrace. Your plan works wonderfully."

"It is true," said the baroness, doubtfully, "that was the plan."

"And a magnificent one," said the grand duke.

"But I have altered it, your highness."

"And this alteration, Amalia?"

"Involves a trip to Vienna."

"Not yet, Amalia. We must wait."

"I am going," said the baroness, "with Monsieur de Chateauroux."

The grand duke supported himself by grasping the carriage door.

"Preposterous!" he cried.

"You have given your consent," protested the baroness, "and in the presence of the grand duchess."

"But that," said the astonished grand duke, "was part of the plan."

"Indeed, your highness," said the baroness, "it was a most important part. You must know," she continued, with some diffidence, "that I have had the misfortune to fall in love with Monsieur de Chateauroux."

"Who is in love with the grand duchess?"

"I have reason to believe," said the baroness, modestly, "that he is in love with me."

"Especially after hearing him last night," suggested the grand duke.

"That scene, your highness, he had carefully rehearsed with me."

The grand duke gazed meditatively at the baroness, who had the grace to blush.

"Then it was," he asked, slowly, "a comedy for my benefit?"

"You would never have consented, you know," she began. But the grand duke's countenance, which was slowly altering to a dusky green, caused her to pause.

"You will get over it in a week, Louis," she murmured; "and you will find other—baronesses."

"Probably," said his highness, grinning in a ghastly fashion. "Nevertheless," he added, "it was a mean trick to play on the grand duchess."

"I do not think the grand duchess will complain," said the baroness.

Then a light broke slowly on the grand duke. "You planned all this beforehand?" he inquired, with a carefully modulated voice.

"Precisely, your highness."

"And Chateauroux helped you?"

"Precisely, your highness."

"And the grand duchess knew?"

"The grand duchess suggested it, your highness."

The grand duke turned his back to her. "Monsieur de Chateauroux," he called, "I find the lady is adamant. I wish you a pleasant journey." He held open the door of the carriage for Chateauroux to enter.

"You will forgive us, your highness?" asked the latter.

"You will forget?" murmured the baroness.

"I will do both," said the grand duke. "*Bon voyage, mes enfants!*"

With a cracking of whips the carriage drove off.

"Victoria," said the grand duke, with admiration, "you are a remarkable woman. I think that I will walk for a while in the gardens, and meditate on the perfections of my wife."

He strolled off in the direction of the woods. As he reached the summit of a slight incline, he turned and looked over the road that leads from Breschau to Vienna. A cloud of dust showed where the carriage had disappeared.

Editorial Afterthoughts

Comparison of "As Played Before His Highness" and the GALLANTRY episode "The Ducal Audience" (in the original 1907 version) reveals that the story underwent far fewer changes than "An Amateur Ghost," but that there were, nonetheless, four major kinds of alteration:

1. Small but interesting changes in wording, mostly to enhance plausibility or precision. The "family tree" that the duke considers including in his portmanteau becomes "the sceptre." The carriage, which seems to operate by itself in the magazine version, is provided with a coachman and two footmen. The book dates the story's events in 1755, and the dialogue, pruned of modernisms, is given a stately, period flavor; the duke no longer smokes a cigarette.

2. Deletion of several passages, mostly jesting conversation that does not further the story; for example, in section III, the passage starting "She has taken leave of her senses" and ending "it seems that Chateauroux did."

3. Addition of material to strengthen the characterization and motivation. The beauty of the grand duchess is expanded upon, as are her qualifications to rule Noumaria as regent. The duke is given several new lines, subtly pleading with the baroness not to leave with Chateauroux. Six new paragraphs explore more deeply the relationship between duke and baroness.

4. Insertion of details that fit the story into the structure of GALLANTRY, more or less by main force. It actually has little or

nothing to do with the plot-line of the book (a quasi-novel, at least as unified as *THE SILVER STALLION* or *SMITH*). Through a new "Proem," however, Cabell identifies the grand duke as Louis de Soyecourt, who has appeared in three previous episodes and is the point-of-view character in the book's "Afterpiece," "Love's Alumni." In the middle of the story an entirely new section ties the events of the tale to those of the preceding episode, "The Scapegoats." (And in "The Scapegoats" we learn something of the machinations by which de Soyecourt becomes Grand Duke of Noumaria, and discover that the duchess is the Elector of Baden-burg's daughter, Victoria von Uhm.)

A paragraph at the end of "The Ducal Audience," moreover, changes the entire complexion of the denouement, clearly implying that, with or without the baroness, the duke will leave his wife (as "Love's Alumni" confirms).

The book version, then, is both more polished and better endowed with characterization and background. (The Kalki and Storische revisions are modest, through not always chaste.) It remains, however, one of Cabell's frothier tales, exemplifying what he meant by referring to *GALLANTRY* as "very resolutely superficial."

Still, the tale has some importance. Though not a fantasy, it is a milestone in Cabell's development as a fantasist, being the first story in which he makes use of an imaginary realm. Noumaria, with its capital of Breschau, scarcely ranks with Poictesme (though that too was introduced in *GALLANTRY*), but it was Step One. (In "The Scapegoats," by the way, we learn that Noumaria lies between Silesia and Baden-burg—which latter is apparently also a Cabell invention. In *JURGEN*, Noumaria recurs as one of the presumably fictive lands of which the pawnbroker claims to be royalty—during his adventures in Hell he announces himself as Noumaria's Emperor.)

The more one studies Cabell's youthful stories, in fact, the more apparent it becomes that the seeds of his mature works were sown surprisingly early. Indeed, the comic style of both "An Amateur Ghost" and the present tale negates the frequent assumption that the young Cabell was a gushing sentimentalist.