



BY ANTHONY HOPE
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CHAPTER XIV.
THE KING'S CUP.

At least the vicar would be pleased. A whimsical joy in the anticipation of his delight shot across his gloomy meditations as the sunset rays threaded their way through the narrow window of the chamber that was my cell. The thought of him stayed with me, and I could imagine his wise, contented nod, far from surprised at the news, and full of self-approval as an egg of meat. For he had never wavered. Of a truth the prophecy which old Betty North spoke (foolishness though it were) was through fortune's freak two parts fulfilled. What remained might rest unfulfilled to my great content; small comfort had I won from so much as had come to pass. I had loved where the king had loved, and my youth, though it raised its head again, still rested under the shadow of his hand. I had loved where the king had loved, and my youth, though it raised its head again, still rested under the shadow of his hand.

There is little profit and less entertainment in the record of my angry, desponding thoughts. Now I lay like a log, again I ranged the cell as a host in his rage. I had a headache, and I was weary. I had a headache, and I was weary. I had a headache, and I was weary.

"You are the gentleman I wanted?" he asked. "I have reason to suppose so, your grace, I answered. "Good," said he. "The duke of Monmouth and I have spoken to the king on your behalf."

"I bowed grateful acknowledgments. "You are free," he continued, to my joy. "You'll leave with two horses, and I'll add to my constabulary. But he appeared to perceive neither effect of his words. "These are the king's orders," he ended composedly. "But," I cried, "if I leave the castle, how can I fulfill your grace's desire?"

"I said those were the king's orders. I have something to add to them. Here, I have written it down, that you may understand and not forget. Your lantern there gives a poor light, but your eyes are young. Read what is written, sir."

"I took the paper that he handed me and read. "In two hours' time he at Cannonsgate. The gate will be open. Two serving men will be there with two horses, and you will be conducted to the gate and delivered into your charge. You will ride with her as speedily as possible to Deal. You will tell her your grace's desire, and I'll send a woman to this gentleman, return immediately to London, and lie in safe hiding till word reaches you from me."

"I read and turned to him in amazement. "Well," he asked, "isn't it plain enough?" "The woman I am a guinea," I answered. "But I pray your grace to tell me who is the gentleman."

"What need is there for you to know? Do you think that more than one will seek you at the Merry Mariners' tavern, and pray your grace to send a woman to this gentleman, return immediately to London, and lie in safe hiding till word reaches you from me."

He frowned and beat his gloves on his thigh impatiently. "A gentleman, your grace," said I, "must be trusted or he cannot serve."

"He looked round the little cell, and asked significantly. "Is your state such as to entitle you to make conditions?" "Only when your grace has need of services," I said, "and I give or refuse, I answered, bowing. His irritation suddenly vanished, and seemed to vanish. He leaned back in his chair and laughed.

"You'll accept the task?" asked the duke. "The little doubt that I had harbored was gone. Buckingham and Monmouth were hand in hand. Buckingham's object was plain. Monmouth was to lead his reward to the king's right at the end of the table. The king raised his hand, as though to impose silence. Madame bowed in ecstasies of submission. M. de Perrencourt took no heed of the gesture, although he did not speak again. A moment later he laid his hand on Colbert's shoulder and whispered to him. "I thought I was to rescue, not to be rescued," Colbert looked up and nodded. M. de Perrencourt folded his arms on the back of the chair, and his face resumed its impassivity.

"What do you mean, what do you mean?" he asked plainly enough. "I am not a man of words," he said, "but I am a man of action. I will do what I can for you, but I will not be a man of words."

"I don't know," I answered, and I asked the officer, "Go to account, sir." "The king's orders," he answered, curtly. "You must come with me at once." At a sign from him his men took their stand on either side of me. Verily, my liberty was short. "I am not a man of words," he said, "but I am a man of action. I will do what I can for you, but I will not be a man of words."

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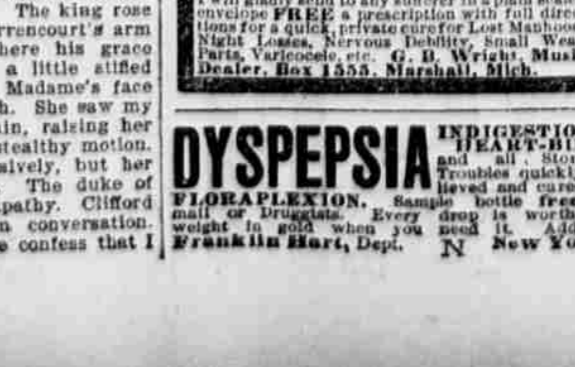
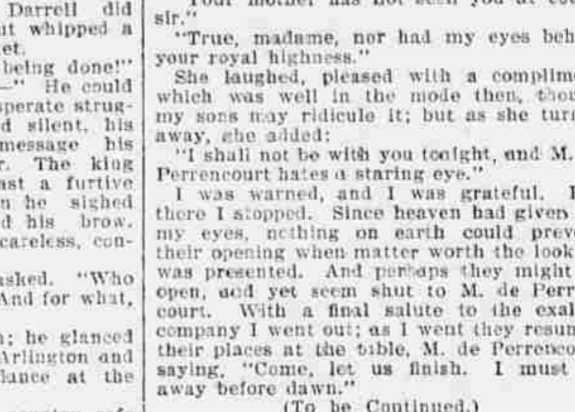
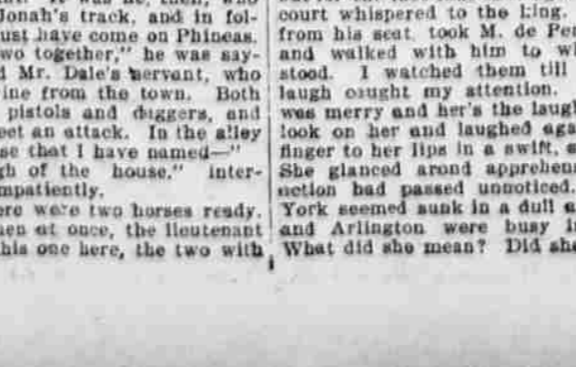
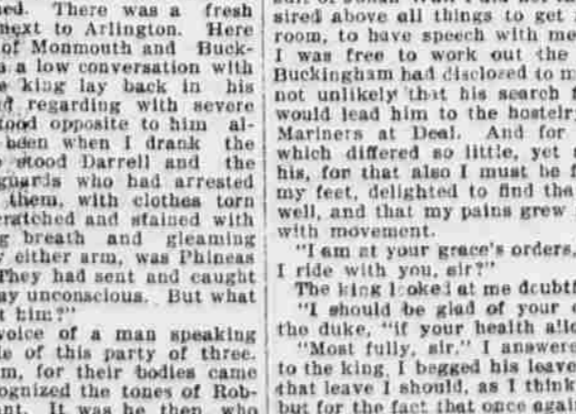
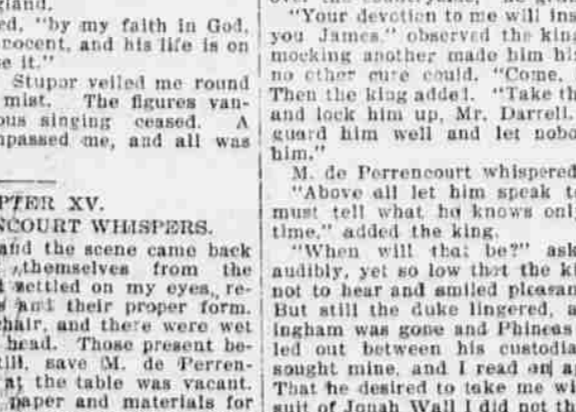
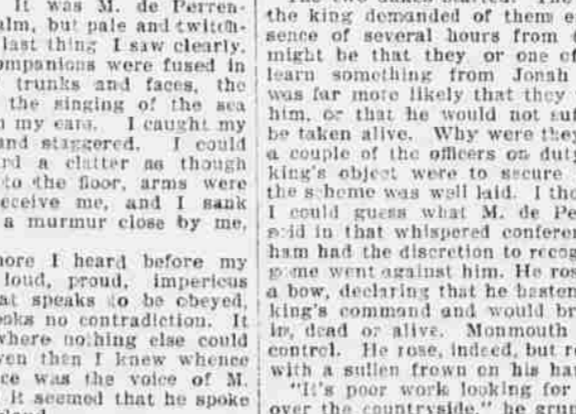
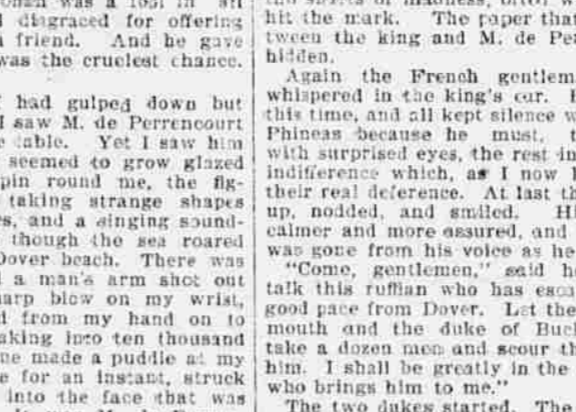
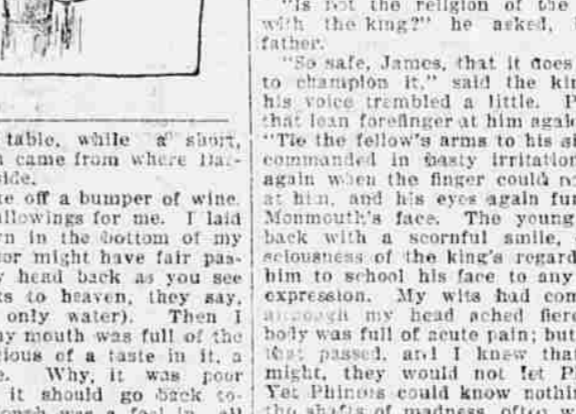
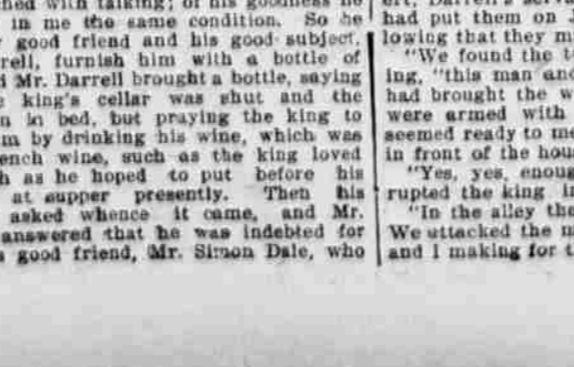
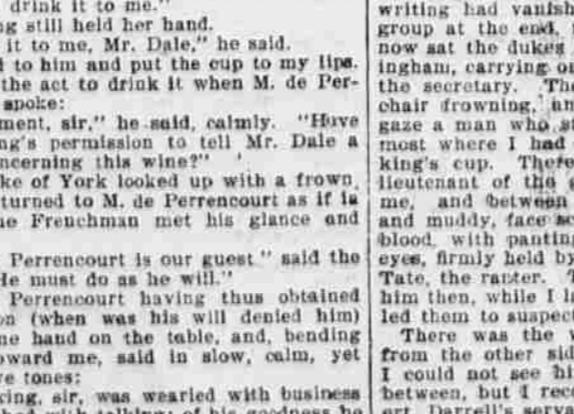
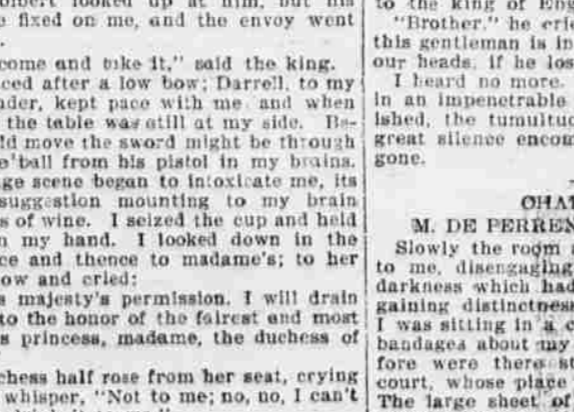
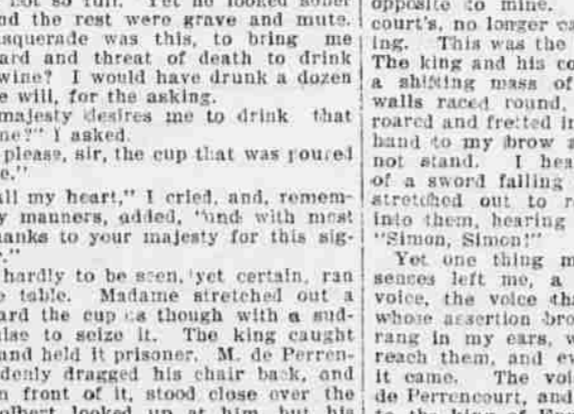
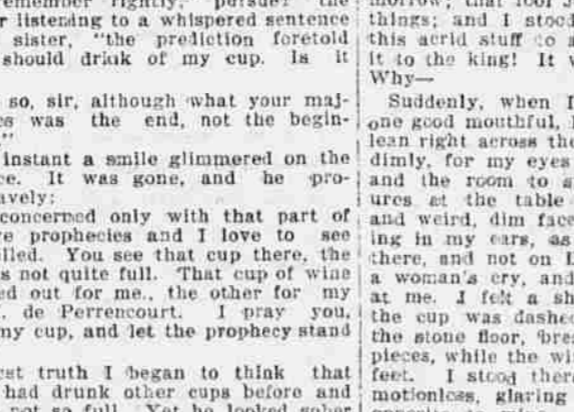
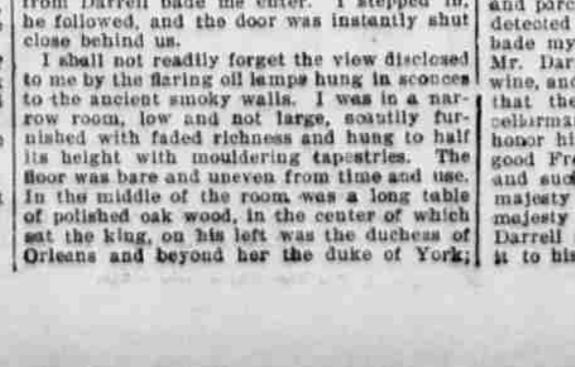
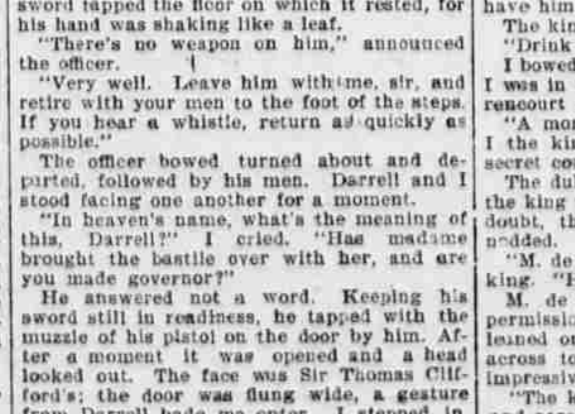
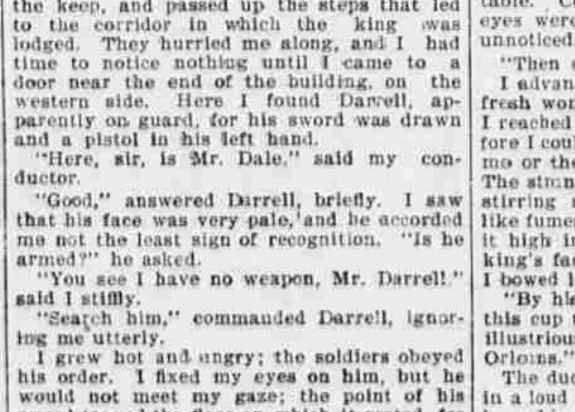
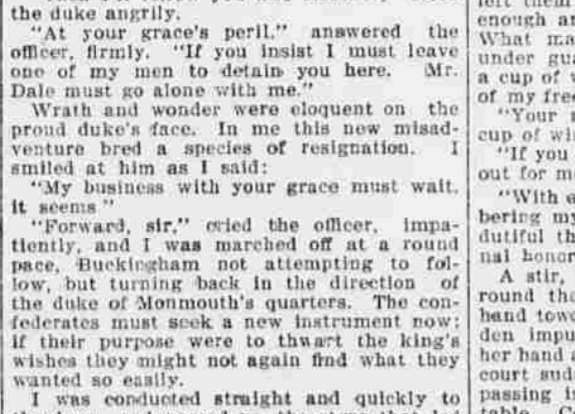
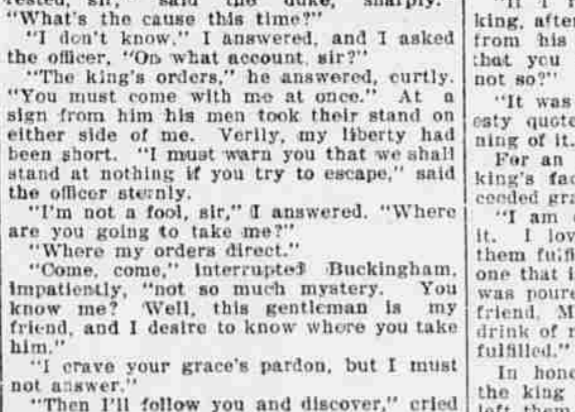
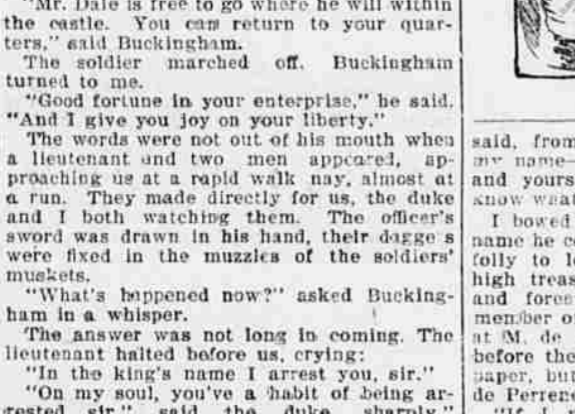
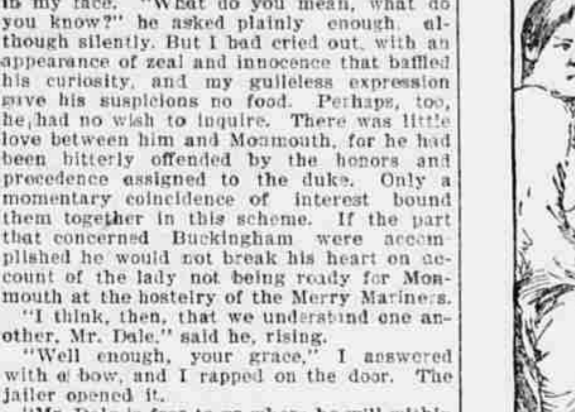
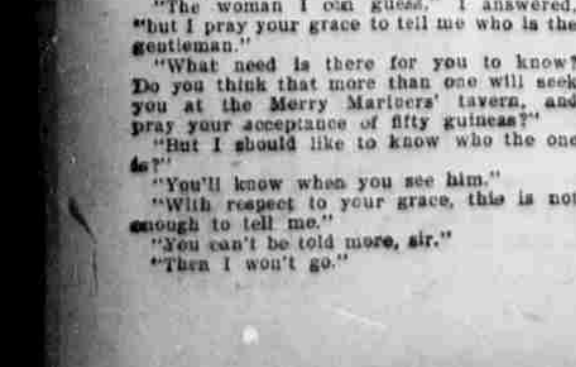
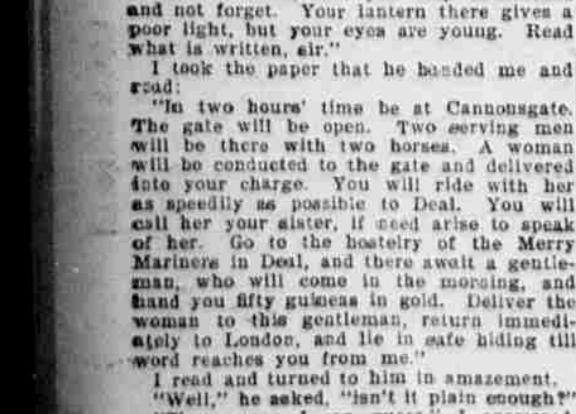
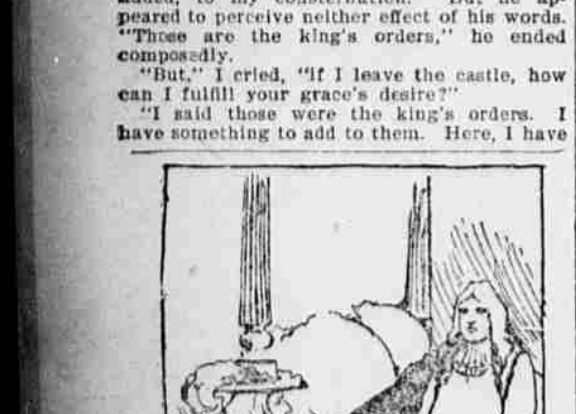
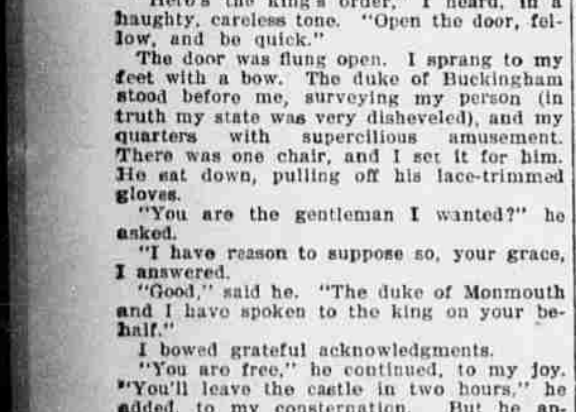
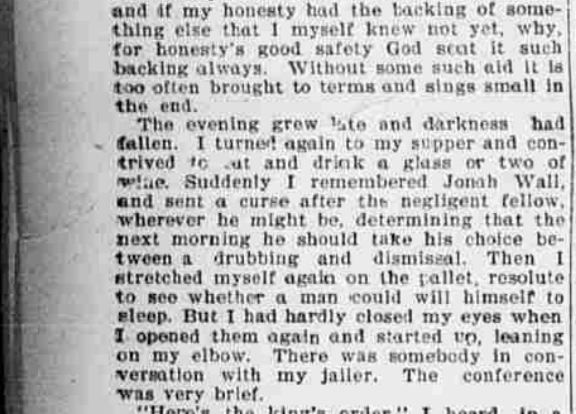
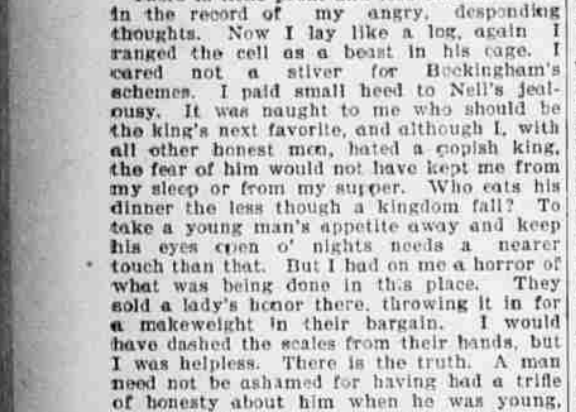
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