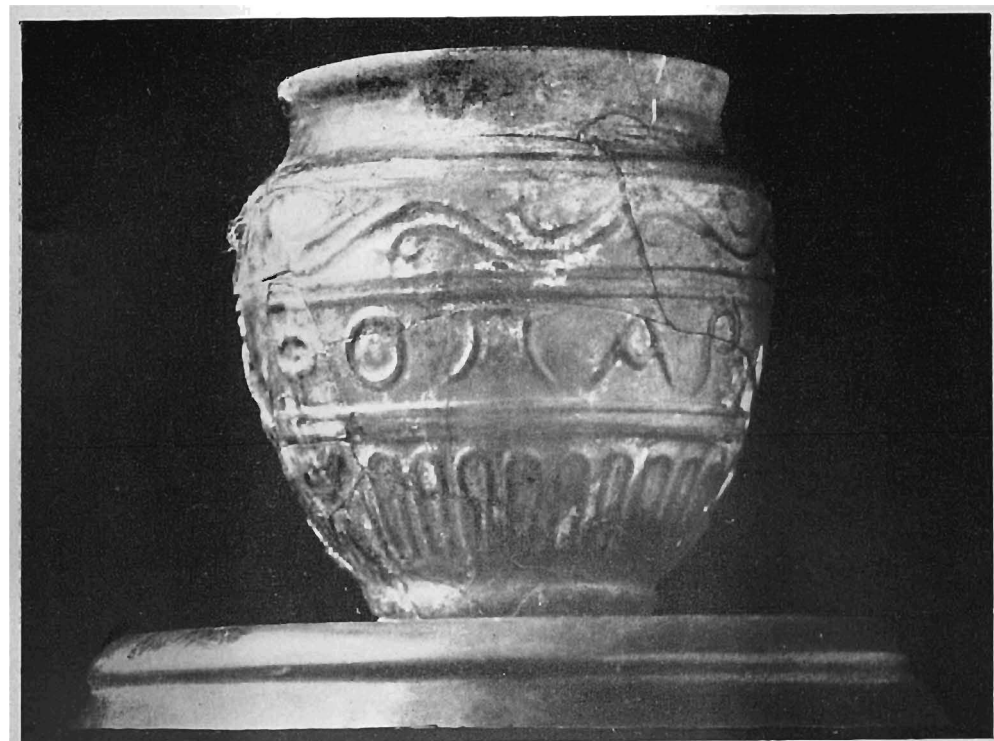


GLASS CHALICES OF THE FIRST CENTURY.¹

BY J. RENDEL HARRIS, M.A., LITT.D., D.THEOL., ETC.

STUDENTS of the literature of the Christian Church or of the history of its institutions, are aware that there is an uncharted area both in the literature and in the institutional history. Speaking roughly we may say that we do not know what happened between A.D. 60 and A.D. 100. We have no books or papers that we can certainly assign to that period, although we are morally sure that the period was no more destitute of literary activity than the earlier years of the century, or the opening of the second century. That it was a formative period for institutions and for the development of customs might be granted, but that helps us very little to the knowledge of the operation of the evolutionary processes by which the creeds, the ritual, and the orders of the Church were produced. My friend Dr. Salmon, of Dublin, who was the keenest witted man of any with whom I have had the happiness of intercourse, put it this way : the Church went into a tunnel ; we saw it go in and we saw it come out, but what went on inside the tunnel we have no means of determining. That puts the situation very neatly. We are not moving over a plain or across a prairie ; we are passing through a mountain wall, for every tunnel implies a watershed over it, and the longer the tunnel the higher the watershed, and whether high or low, we shall find the streams moving in opposite directions on the two sides of the tunnel. So it becomes important to determine, if possible, what went on in the tunnel. We are at first limited to conjecture ; as I said, we see the train go in, and we see it emerge, we see the prophet go in, and the priest emerge, we see the Agapé go in and the Eucharist emerge ; we see the Lord's Table go in and the Altar

¹ An abstract of a lecture, with lantern illustrations, delivered in the John Rylands Library, Manchester, on 15th December, 1926.



I. THE WIEGAND CUP (TWO VIEWS)

emerge;¹ we see the Church enter the tunnel heavily laden with Eschatology, and we see it come out with a reduced doctrine of the Last Things, which now are little more than the Last Day, the Last Judgment. We see St. Peter and St. Paul stepping off the train at the last station on one side, but whether St. John remained on board we are not able to decide. If he did stay on board, then he underwent some 'train-change' himself along with the rest of the passengers.

It need scarcely be said that such a historical uncharted area as we have suggested lent itself to the formation of legends on the large scale. Who knows what went on? The legend makers tell us, and have continued to tell us right down to the Middle Ages.

For example, we have the High History of the Holy Grail, which makes continuity for us with the Upper Room at Jerusalem, and with the furniture of the Upper Room. What are we to say of these traditions as to the possible or probable recovery of the actual cup which was used at the Last Supper?

Everyone, since Tennyson versified the legends for us, knows something of the Holy Grail, of its appearance at Glastonbury in the early days of British Christianity, and its mysterious disappearance. Whence it came from, no man knows with certainty, but the monks said it had been brought from Jerusalem by Joseph of Arimathea, and in accordance with this tradition Tennyson in the *Holy Grail* makes Percivale say:

"The cup, the very cup from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah—the good saint
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord,
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,
By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven and disappear'd."

¹ Leonardo da Vinci asks me to say that he was following the historical method in painting a restaurant and not a church, and a table rather than an altar; he had really done his best with the materials at his disposal.

(There are some pretty alliterations in the versification in the second, fourth, and fifth lines, but we are not making a literary study.) At Glastonbury, however, they do not agree with Percivale that the Cup has been caught away to Heaven : it is said to be buried in the hill-side, to which the moderns audaciously give the name of Chalice Hill ; and I noticed lately that as careful an antiquary as Mr. Arthur Weigall regarded the excavation of the Cup as a possibility. One can believe anything at Glastonbury and in the Glastonbury atmosphere.

A little study of the monastic legends which are extant will show that it was only slowly that the story of Joseph of Arimathea settled into form. It has no early attestation, and no internal consistency. To begin with, it had nothing to do with the Last Supper, it was a *dish* that he brought, in which he had collected the blood from the sacred wounds ; then, that it was a *couple of cruets* (they are still to be seen on Somerset monuments), one containing the blood of the Lord, and the other his sweat, or perhaps the water which in the Gospel is adjacent to the blood. Here is the coat of arms assigned to St. Joseph, being a gentleman, in which the two cruets can be observed. Certainly the name Holy Grail connotes blood, for the mediæval Sangreal has been wrongly divided, and should read, not as *San Greal*, but as *Sang Real*, or Royal Blood, which suggests at once that the legend has come across from France, and that there was never anything of the nature of a Grail. It is true, philologically, that the Grail has disappeared, for it never existed. However, we can hardly dispense with so convenient a term, and I propose to retain it, and to show you, if not the actual grail-cup, or one of the actual cups, of the Last Supper, at least one that is so cognate with the table-furniture of the Last Supper, that we shall be able to revive and restore to reality certain incidents of the Supper and of the Betrayal which was associated with it.

Now this is worth doing, and not the least desirable as an investigation, because of the uncertainty and to some extent the inconsistency of the evangelical traditions. The history of the Eucharist has never been written ; what passes for history in ecclesiastical circles has, no doubt, a historical nucleus, if we could get at it, but it is an overlaid nucleus, in which many modern scholars profess to find traces of contemporary Greek or Pagan mysteries. That would be an interesting subject for a lecture, but my task is simpler. I propose to use the

combined methods of archæological and literary research, and to show you, what might even be taken for the headline and title of my discourse, that

The Holy Grail was a glass cup with a Greek Legend upon it.

In searching for the substratum of fact which underlies the traditions of the Last Supper, we have the advantage of a remarkable discovery by Dr. Deissmann, with regard to the material of the cup, out of which our Lord drank with his disciples.

There was in the possession of his friend Dr. Wiegand, a glass cup, considered by experts, who know of several similar cups, to be a Sidonian product of the first century. Around this cup there ran, in Greek letters, what appeared to be a drinking legend in which conviviality was encouraged in the words :

‘What are you here for? be merry.’

A comparison with similar drinking formulæ upon ancient cups, suggests that possibly the complete sentence was,

‘Comrade, what are you here for? be merry.’

or in Greek, with microscopic variations,

ἔταίρε, ἐφ’ ᾧ πάρει; εὐφραίνου.

(we have added accents, etc., which are, of course, wanting in the Greek lettering on the cup).

So far there was nothing to attract the attention of the student. It was not more remarkable than if we were to dig up a cup of British manufacture, and read on its rim the words,

‘We’ll tak’ a cup o’ kindness yet.’

Dr. Deissmann, however, detected that the Greek legend was actually in the text of the Gospel of Matthew (c. xxii., 50), where it formed a part of the conversation between our Lord and Judas, the traitor, the sentence being appropriately shorn of the last word ‘be merry.’ Deissmann pointed out that the oldest translators of the New Testament had rightly made a question out of the sentence, though the Greek was not Attic, and a relative pronoun had the place of an interrogative. On the other hand there were some who failed to understand the interrogation, and in our own days, the Revisers of the

New Testament were pedantic enough to add a word for the supposed sake of clearness, and say

“*Do that for which thou art come.*”¹

We can the better excuse the Revisers in their failure to recognise that they were dealing with a question expressed in popular Greek, when we notice the difficulty which has been caused by the language to those who have published and explained the glass cups and their legends to which we have referred. Perhaps the most amusing was the translation given by Miss Gisela M. Richter, of the Metropolitan Museum, New York, who explained the legend upon a cup which was in the possession of an American collector (and, since Mr. Curtis’ death, has passed to the Museum at Toledo, Ohio), as meaning :

Be glad over what Paris (was glad),

to wit, the beauty of women !

Not much better was the translation given by Kisa, in his valuable work *Das Glas in Alterthum* (Vol. iii., p. 721) ; he translates

“*Freue dich so lange du hier bist*” :

as

(Enjoy yourself, as long as you are here) ;

in which, again, the interrogative is avoided.

This, then, is Deissmann’s discovery ; for, in this matter, I am only a reporter for the Press ; there can be no doubt that he has detected the motive of our Lord’s question to Judas, and has justified as historical the incident in Matthew (even if it has no parallel in Luke or Mark). He made, however, the mistake of supposing that Matthew was translating an Aramaic saying of Jesus, and had done

¹ They had, in altering the rendering of the Authorised Version, the authority of one Latin MS., the Armagh Gospels, which read,

Amice, fac ad quod venisti ;

and I was interested to see that a similar expansion appears to have been behind the commentary of ’Iṣōdad, the East Syrian father, for he makes the following elucidation :

“Comrade, wherefore art thou come ? that is to say, it is not right for thee to take a false shape, but *do openly that for which thou art come*, because I am a knower of hidden things, and I of my own will have delivered myself up to suffering.”

The combination of Eastern and Western support for the Revisers is interesting ; but it does not seem to be due to Tatian ; if we may judge from the Liège Harmony, which reads :

Vrint, wat sukstu hir ? (Friend, what do you want here ?)



2. THE BRITISH MUSEUM (SHERLOCK) CUP (TWO VIEWS)

the saying into a popular Greek formula. This supposition weakens the identification of the Matthæan language with the Greek drinking legends, by thrusting in an unnecessary Aramaic sentence between them and assuming two separate translations into popular Greek.¹ It also obscures the central point of the situation, according to which Jesus reminds Judas of the cup out of which they have been drinking together, with exquisite grace and the significant omission of the advice to be merry. It was as if he said, Is this your cup o' kindness, Judas ?

We may state the discovery as follows :

"The original Holy Grail was a glass cup, with a Greek drinking legend around its rim";

from which it follows that

"Jesus talked Greek with his disciples at the Last Supper, or, at all events, with the Traitor in the Garden."

As we have indicated, there are several of these glass cups in existence ; the Wiegand cup, as we may call it, is now in my own possession. Two other cups are in the Berlin Museum ; a fourth is in the Museum at Leyden ; a fifth, said to come from the neighbourhood of Cremona, is described in Sangiorgi, *Collezione di vetri antichi* (p. 13) ; the sixth is the one referred to above, formerly in the possession of Mr. E. Curtis, Plainfield, New Jersey, and now in the Museum at Toledo, Ohio, and is described by Miss Richter in *Art in America*, Vol. 2 (1914), p. 85. Probably other copies may come to light, now that attention is drawn to the matter. The Wiegand cup was found in the Crimea or perhaps, to be more exact, in the excavations at Olbia ; like the other cups, it is no doubt of Sidonian origin.

Since writing the above another similar cup, a parallel to the Wiegand cup, has been discovered in the British Museum by Miss Helen T. Sherlock. I am inclined to believe that this is the one described by Sangiorgi. As to the date, we have to follow the judgment of archæologists ; if, however, we were allowed to date it ecclesiastically, on the hypothesis of its being related to the cups on the Last Supper table, we should say that it belonged to the 'Silver-and

¹ Perhaps he did not quite mean this, but only one translation into Greek from Aramaic, which translation has taken on a popular vulgar form. That would be improbable and in any case the Aramaic is unnecessary.

Gold-have-I-none age,' which is supposed to overlap very nearly with the 'Rise-up-and-walk age.' For, as I shall show presently, these are not luxury-cups

You will have noticed that I have been assuming that the formula on the drinking cups had the prefixed word 'Comrade,' which we find in the Gospel of Matthew. I have not yet succeeded in finding a sufficiently close parallel for this ; it is not Jesus' ordinary word for his disciples as far as we can make out. It is, however, a proper word for the members of a drinking club.¹ The conjecture which we have made amounts to this : in the restaurant at Jerusalem where the Last Supper was held, each of the company had before him a little cup like the one I am showing you ; but there must have been a larger cup, out of which the lesser cups were filled, and this would naturally have a longer legend, which I suggest began with the word '*Comrade*.' Such cups were no doubt produced on a large scale, like Wedgwood or Doulton ware, and commanded a ready sale in the Levant. They would be on hand in the Jerusalem bazaars of the first century, and, as we have seen, there was an export trade in them as far as the Crimea, and other Greek settlements on the Black Sea.²

¹ Mr. Weigall, who writes so interestingly on *British Antiquities* in the *Daily Mail*, says that an early cup was dug up on a farm in the Eastern Counties, inscribed with the words,

"Friends drink of this."

That would make a good parallel to the legend on our cup. If we were to put it into Greek, the 'Comrade' would re-appear.

² The survival of recurrence of the use of Greek inscription on drinking cups may be illustrated from a passage in Erasmus, *Colloquies* (ed. Bailey, 1, 178) where Eusebius and Timothy and Sophronius discourse as follows :—

Tim : "Your house is so full of Talk, that not only the walls but the very Cups speak."

Eusebius : "What does it say?"

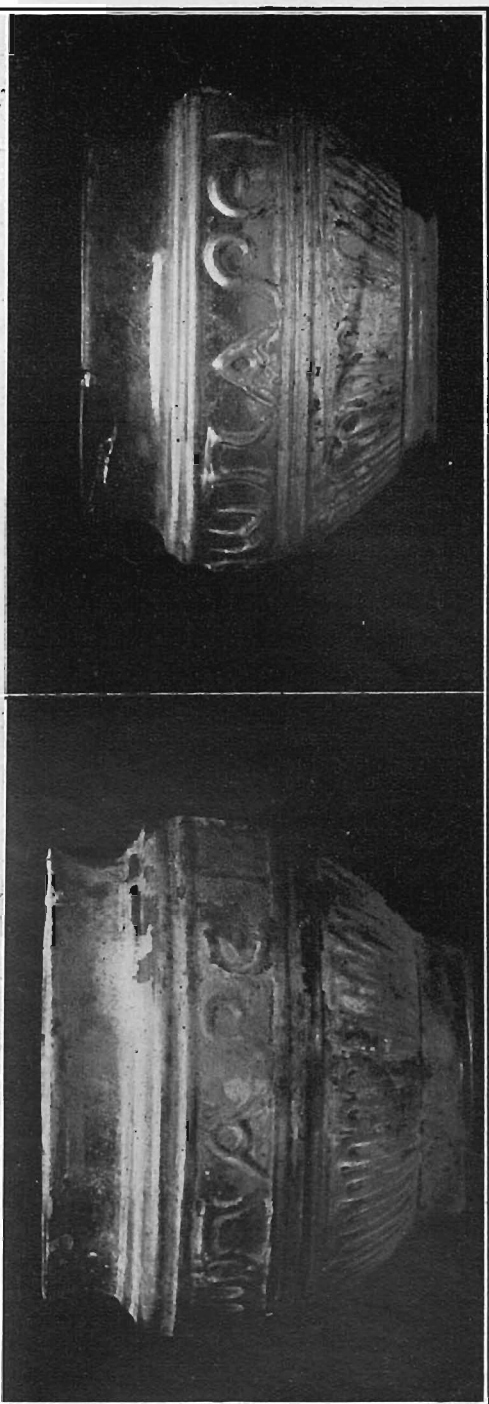
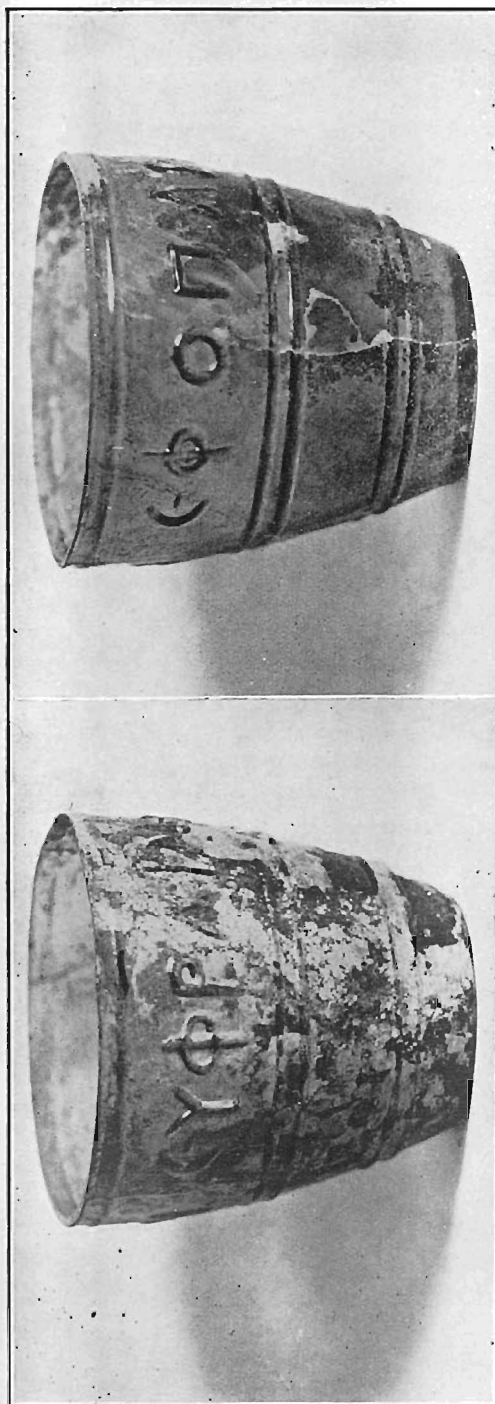
Tim : "No man is hurt but by himself."

Eusebius : "The Cup pleads for the cause of the wine, for it is a common thing if persons get a fever or the headache by over drinking, to lay it upon the wine, when they have brought it upon themselves by their excess."

Sophronius : "Mine speaks Greek,

In wine there's Truth."

I am indebted for this illustration of the persistence or re-appearance of Greek formulæ on drinking cups to my friend Dr. Rutherford.



4. THE TOLEDO CUP (TWO VIEWS)
5-6. THE TWO BERLIN CUPS

They were not, however, luxury cups, even when produced by artists, who had skill in moulding glass, and were proud of their work. (One cup that I have seen has on it not only the maker's name, but the observation in Greek that "Ennion made this ; purchaser, don't forget it !") It would, probably, be nearer the truth to say that they were poverty cups rather than luxury cups ; and in that point of view, it is interesting to notice how commonly glass cups came to be used in the Eucharist. Here is a pretty instance from Egypt in the time of the Diocletian persecution :

"A certain Epimachus, the headman of a village in the Oxyrhyncus district, was brought before the local governor, on the charge of being an obstinate Christian, and required to bring from his village, 'thy priests and thy deacons and the vessels of the liturgy.' The holy Epimachus answered him and said, 'We have not even a priest, but I seek from village to village until I find one who may give us the blessing on the Sabbath and the Lord's day ; and as for the vessels, wherein we are given communion, they are of glass, for we be poor men, dwelling in a little hamlet (ἐποίκιον).'¹

So it seems there were still some districts in which the Church could say, 'Silver and Gold have I none.'

When persecution had, in later days, taken the form of spoliation, it was to this simple feature that Christian people reverted for their vessels of the sanctuary. For example, in the beginning of the eighth century, the Patriarch Alexander ii. explained his inability to pay certain demands, by saying, 'Ye see how we have been despoiled of all the Church property, even to the cups wherein the pure blood is raised up ; we have made, instead of gold and silver, *cups in glass* and patens of wood.'²

Here is another interesting Egyptian case, which as I will show you, has a parallel with my Wiegand cup. It was, as I suppose, in one of the monasteries in the Nitrian desert, probably the one known, after its founder, as Abu Makar, or *Father Macarius* (have we not visited the very spot, and touched the very body of the saint ?) that the deacon was one day in the sanctuary, preparing the gifts (δῶρα)

¹ *Corpus Script. Or.*, Tom. 43, p. 128 ; *Acta Martyrum* : edd. Balestrieri and Hyvernat.

² *Patrologia Orientalis*, Vol. v., p. 62 ; *Hist. of the Patriarchs*, ed. Evetts.

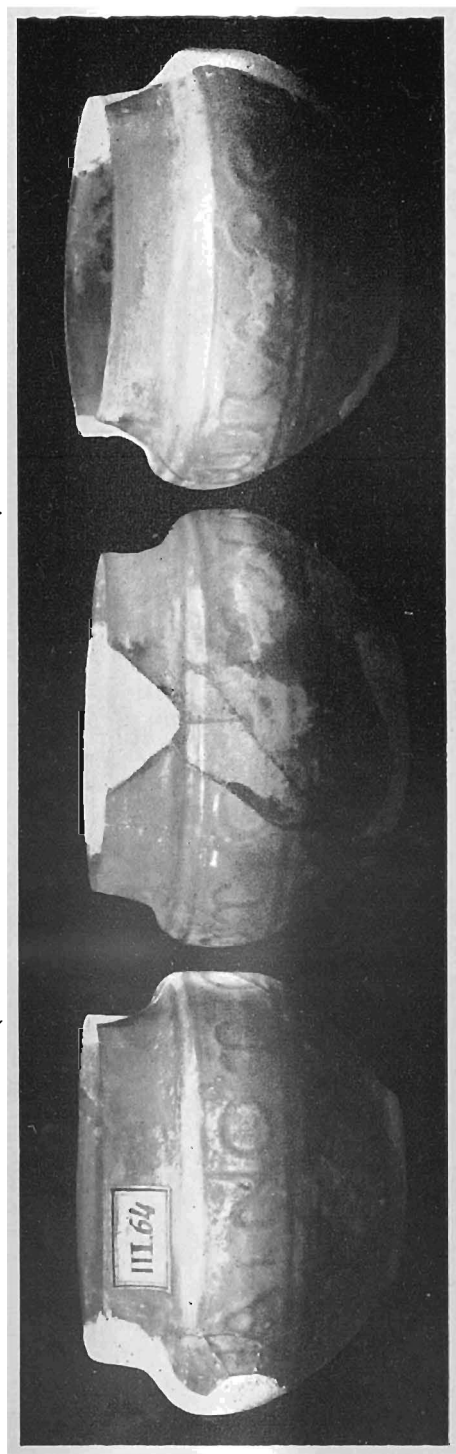
for the celebration ; the cup fell from his hands and became a multitude of fragments (for it was of glass), because it was in the desert and they were not able to have silver cups. Hearing the noise of breaking, Macarius went into the sanctuary, consoled the deacon, and bade him gather every fragment. Then, after a pause, he sent him back into the sanctuary, where he found the cup whole again ; for the cup had joined together, but the signs of the pieces that were broken were visible, although it let no drop go through. Macarius used this cup himself, and another Abbot, coming from Tanis to visit them, begged it for a keepsake, and it is in his monastery to this day.¹

This story from the Nitrian desert and the fifth century pleases me much : for the Wiegand cup had a similar story of disaster ; on its way to me from Berlin it was broken into a mass of fragments. I did not, at the time, know that St. Macarius is (or ought to be) the patron saint of glass menders ; but I found in a side street off Edgware Road² a man who was reputed to have rare skill in restoring dissolute china. To him I went, and showed him the remains of the cup. He looked grave. 'Can you mend it ?' I asked. 'I don't know,' was the reply. 'How long would it take to mend it ?' 'I don't know,' was the reply. 'How much will it cost to mend it ?' 'I don't know, come again on Tuesday.' When I returned as directed, he pushed the cup towards me. 'There it is.' 'And the cost,' ? said I. 'Two shillings,' said he. To which I made a strong and irresistible negative. We settled the matter friendly, and then I told him what he had been working at. Really, when you look at his work, I think you will say that St. Macarius himself could hardly have done it any better.

These illustrations from Coptic Christianity, for which I am indebted to my friend Dr. Crum, will suffice to confirm my opinion that the Wiegand cup and its companions are not luxury cups, though they are genuine works of art.

¹ *Annales de Musée Guimet*, xxv., 255 : *Life of Macarius of Alexandria*. The writer of the story has probably confused Macarius of Alexandria with Macarius the Great.

² What is now known as Harrowby Street. Enquire for Mr. Byron.



3. THE LEYDEN CUP (THREE VIEWS)

NOTE ON CUPS.

We may now present successively the cups that we have been referring to, the pictures of them being made from two sides or even from three, so as to enable the student to trace the Greek inscriptions.

1. The Wiegand Cup, now in our own possession. (Two views.)
2. The British Museum (Sherlock) Cup. (Two views.)
3. The Leyden Cup. (Two views.) From the Leyden Museum. It is badly damaged and has been repaired by the use of plaster of Paris.
4. The Toledo Cup. (Two views.) From the Toledo Museum, Ohio. It is a very beautiful specimen, and may be known either as the Toledo Cup, or, after its former owner, the Curtis Cup.
- 5 and 6. The two cups in the Berlin Museum which may be known as Berlin 1 and Berlin 2.