

# The Cup

BY WILLIAM SHARP

A BUDDHIST'S tomb-shaped cup enwrought in jade,  
With gods of silence carved on its breast:  
But is there peace where war is never made,  
Can Silence live amid eternal rest?

## Editor's Easy Chair.

A NEW version of the famous treatise of Luigi Cornaro on the art of temperate living, comes to us from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. There a votary of the Venetian sage has made it his business and pleasure to reprint the discourses of Cornaro, together with several kindred passages from the writings of Addison, Bacon, and Sir William Temple, and to publish them all in a volume embellished with portraits of the different writers, beginning with Cornaro himself. In this volume the editor and publisher has pertinently and advantageously assembled other matters, such as an agreeable sketch of Cornaro's life, which we may attribute to Mr. William F. Butler himself, since it is assigned to no other; the sonnets of Hieronimo Gualdo addressed to Cornaro a hundred years after his death, and the poem dedicated to him two centuries later still by John Witt Randall, the grandson of Samuel Adams. There is an account of the Cornaro family and its eminent members, and a pleasing description of Cornaro's villas in and about the city of Padua, by Professor Emilio Lovarini of Bologna. Out of the large body of literature which has reincarnated the centenarian, and will probably perpetuate his memory as long as men wish to bring the psalmist to confusion by passing his limit ten, twenty, or thirty years and more, Mr. Butler has chosen intelligently and tastefully; and there is adventitiously a fitness in this translation coming from the region, if not the State, which has sold the world so many health foods: for though Milwaukee itself suggests beer rather than breakfast

cereals there is everything in the proximity of Battle Creek to inspire the hope that this may be the hour for men to think again of living temperately. Mr. Butler has done what he could to perfect his edition with the help of many Italian scholars, and those who wish to eat wisely if not too well, may have courage to feel that they cannot err by following Cornaro's instruction in the present English terms.

### I

We have all known for near upon four hundred years, though many of us will like to be reminded that Cornaro's treatise on *The Temperate Life* is made up of four discourses, written respectively at the age of eighty-three, eighty-six, ninety-one, and ninety-six years, and offered with constantly mounting satisfaction to the large public which the first had interested. If toward the last the satisfaction becomes rather more like self-satisfaction, it is a pleasure in having kept faithfully to a course judiciously chosen which the reader could not deny the venerable author without churlishness; we think he will be more inclined to own with us the charm of his piety and philanthropy. This is such indeed as to make one willing to live, or at least willing for others to live, upon twelve daily ounces of "bread, the yolk of an egg, a little meat, and some soup, with not above fourteen ounces of wine"; for it seems as if the grace and peace of such health as Cornaro's could not be too widely spread. One could easily allow the harmless spiritual pride which the beneficiaries of such a diet might feel, and if it conduced

to the amiability which everywhere appears in Cornaro's discourses, one would scarcely object to their longevity; though Hawthorne has noted in his romance of *Septimius Felton* the danger men run of cumbering the earth by remaining too long upon it. In one of those wonderful memoranda which intersperse the fragmentary story, he invites himself to "express the weariness" of the younger generation "at the intolerable control the undying one had of them; his always bringing up precepts from his own experience, never consenting to anything new, and so impeding progress; his habits hardening into him; his ascribing to himself all wisdom, and depriving everybody of his right to successive command; his endless talk, and dwelling on the past, so that the world could not bear him. Describe his ascetic and severe habits, his rigid calmness, etc."

But in Cornaro there is apparently nothing of all this, and we do not think it is to be feared in his followers if they do not live much beyond a hundred; if they pass a hundred and twenty-five, say, they might become the sort of oppressors that Hawthorne dreads, or whimsically affects to dread. Cornaro himself lived to be only a hundred and two years old, and that may be the reason why he continued so modest and kindly to the end. In his fourth discourse, when he might logically have been growing arrogant, he does nothing worse than recall the services he has rendered his beloved Venice in teaching her how she may keep her lagoon and harbor in condition for a thousand years, how she may increase her food-supply by draining her marshes and irrigating her arid plains, how she may strengthen her position so as to be almost invulnerable, how she may grow in beauty and riches, and how sweeten and purify to perfection her healthful air. But this is a sort of self-indulgence which we should not forbid a man of fifty or sixty, and there is no reason why we should grudge it to a man of ninety-six, who may also be allowed a little pleasure in the patience with which he has borne the loss of his fortune, and in the freedom from the dominion of the appetites which he has achieved by his reasonable and virtuous life. The most bigoted agnostic could hardly blame him for his final con-

viction "that our departure from this world is not death, but merely a passage which the soul makes from this earthly life to a heavenly one, immortal and infinitely perfect," and no one else could accuse him of cold-heartedness when he says, "Even the death of any of my grandchildren, or of any other relatives or friends, could never cause me trouble except the first instinctive motion of the soul, which, however, soon passes away." As for his amusements, it does not appear very selfish to spend one's leisure at such an advanced age in writing "on various topics, especially architecture and agriculture," or in conversing "with various men of fine and high intellect," from whom he says he never fails to learn something. If the conscientious abstainer cannot allow Cornaro his innocent superstition that "wine is truly the milk of the aged," and that as he cannot drink any sort of wine in either July or August, he must certainly perish but for the new wine which he is "always careful to have ready by the beginning of September," yet the most disorderly and dyspeptic glutton would probably agree that a great deal of unmerited suffering would be spared the best of us if we did not eat to excess. For the moral effect of his constant thought of himself, and his perpetual delight in having discovered in his temperance the elixir of life, or at least of a long life, no critic could imagine censuring Cornaro.

We will confess that we seemed to find something oversmoothly complacent in his dwelling on the delight he has in his house "in the most beautiful quarter of the noble and learned city of Padua," and his "various gardens, beautified by running streams," whether in the town, or at his "extremely comfortable and fine country-seat in the most desirable part of the Euganean Hills," where he takes part, "at times in some easy and pleasant hunting," suited to his age. But reading up and down and back and forth across the pages, we came upon something that gave us pause. It was the passage in which he tells us how he enjoys his "villa in the plain," which was formerly a waste place of "marshy and unwholesome atmosphere, a home rather for snakes than for human beings," but where after he had "drained off the

waters," he says "the air became healthful, and people flocked thither from every direction,—the number of the inhabitants began to multiply exceedingly, and . . . I can say, with truth, that in this place I have given God an altar, a temple, and souls to adore him." This could hardly be called an unseemly boast, by the most hypercritical, and upon the whole no such complete case can be made out against Cornaro as that which Hawthorne imagines of "the undying one" in his romance. There the egotist, who drinks the elixir of life, prescribes for himself a regimen revolting to many beside the glutton and sluggard. He is to observe of course a very spare diet; but he is also in the interest of his longevity to keep an even pulse of about seventy a minute; question any possible heart-throb for its meaning; forbear all resentments as deleterious, and forget if not forgive his enemies; touch no man's hand and no woman's lips; do some good daily, for the glow of self-approval is healthful, and eschew evil because remorse corrodes; shun the sick, the maimed, the destitute and miserable, for the sight of these is hurtful; smile continually, for that begets an inward cheerfulness; ignore wrinkles and gray hairs, since these increase with recognition; not read the great poets, who stir the heart unduly; not long for anything ardently; and above all guard himself from falling in love as from a fatal thing.

## II

No doubt it was with a haunting remembrance of all this that we turned to the discourses of Cornaro in the new version; and it really seems impossible for a man to take constant thought of himself without incurring the danger of self-love hinted in the romancer's irony. All the deeply personalized phases of religion tended to a spiritual consciousness which was not spiritually wholesome. The lives of the saints no less than the old puritanical diaries bear witness to this; and if the records of the literary life itself were searched they would probably be found as abundant in warnings against the vice of self-scrutiny. It is a kind of madness to watch any side of one's nature with incessant vigilance; and it might be shown

that it is better to overeat or even overdrink, now and then, than to be perpetually considering what one shall eat, and what one shall drink. As to the moral effect of such logic it may not be favorable to the high liver, but it is imaginable at least that no man of a make less sweet and commendable than Cornaro's could have been proof for sixty or seventy years against the habit of counting the daily ounces of bread and meat and wine which sustained him in perfect health.

Perfect health, though it is worth much, is possibly not worth so much as that. In Cornaro it conduced to philanthropy, industry, patience, and piety; but mostly it seems to be the sick people who are the wisest, kindest, and best. We would not make this a counsel of gluttony, but who can say how much of the poetry of the world may not have come from disordered livers? Without the dyspepsia of Carlyle the nineteenth century might have been wanting in the highest of its much testimony against shams, and it is hard to think of indigestion and insincerity together. There is always serious danger that the perfectly well man will be a brute, through mere inability to realize what suffering is; and it may be that the boon of uninterrupted health can be safely entrusted only to those who, like Cornaro, have first known the pangs of disease. There will probably not be so many to emulate Cornaro, however, even with the advantage of having him in a new version, that we need guard against the spread of a heartless sobriety. The evil, if it is an evil, is of another sort, and is conditioned in nothing less than longevity itself.

## III

A good old age may be old on almost any terms, but it can be good only on much stricter grounds. It can be good if it is the age of a man who has led a just life; and we all know how difficult that is. Otherwise it will be full of cares worse than pains, which may increase with it, in spite of a high bodily condition, for the mind works backward in the later years and dwells upon the irretrievable errors of the past, since there are no longer the hopes of the future to amuse it. It is a pleasant con-

vention that the old are comforted in recalling the happiness of other times; but this is a convention only. Happiness is something we cannot feel except in imparting it, and there is nothing bores the young so much, or that they turn from with such lively resentment, as the by-gone joys which the old try to share with them. The old must look forward as the young must; but the old can look forward only to a world beyond this; so that the psalmist's limit was probably not too closely drawn, after all. By means of twelve ounces of food and fourteen of drink a good man like Cornaro could pass thirty-two years beyond the limit in serenity; but the average sinner might very well wish to be gone earlier. The average saint, in fact, is of no such joyous temper, or pleasing occupation that he always desires to stay. Sometimes he experiences a loss of all the earthly interests, and his heart sinks with the misgiving which oppressed an old Armenian monk of San Lazzaro at Venice. It appears that the air of the lagoons is friendly to longevity, and this old monk had lived longer than Cornaro by six years, upon a diet probably as temperate as his, and with a past of as few regrets. But toward the end he went sadly about complaining that God had forgotten him.

That is not the grief of most men; they are too sharply aware of being specially looked after in their aches and pains; but after a certain period no man is quite at home on earth. It is not only that so many who made it home for him are gone. The fashion of the world has insensibly changed and from time to time he is conscious of another way of doing, thinking, feeling, which his feet cannot find, no matter how eagerly he gropes for it. He is a little droll in his old fashion, and if he makes himself over in the new fashion he is much more than a little droll. Better yield meekly and go to the wall, for it is there that real youth, veritable modernity, must push him whether it will or not. Its very kindness is full of anguish for him, unless his sensibilities are dulled by time, and often it does not think to be even cruelly kind. Its crude, unconscious force appals him; and he asks himself, as well as he can, with the breath knock-

ed out of him by some unmeant thrust or pressure from it, if he was once like that. Very probably he thinks he was not, but very probably he was; and he begins to feel the dismay of meeting his former self much earlier than he would have supposed.

In most cases the fear of the young does not beset the elderly at a period which most of the elderly would regard as an hour of the golden prime; but the fear of youth is something that steals upon one unawares, and realizes itself to him by some sudden accident. Such as it is, however, and of such hour as it is, it seems to be a more palpable motive for not living above a hundred, than the modest dread of being a bore, and a burden to succeeding generations. These will take care of themselves, in spite of Hawthorne's fantastic surmise. They will not be much put about by the presence of the sage, or much bound by the maxims of his toothlessly mumbled wisdom. Rather, his mortal juniors would be apt to make the world so lively for the undying one who attempted to stay its course that he would wish himself out of it in much less than a thousand years.

#### IV

In Tourguénief's heart-breakingly beautiful story, "The Nest of Nobles," there is a passage of such pathos as aches undyingly in the memory. After many years, Lavretsky, the good unhappy Lavretsky, who has loved and lost the gentle Lisa, comes back to the house where he used to see her. It is full of young people who were children when Lisa and he were young; and one of the girls impulsively proposes a game of Puss-in-the-Corner. There are just enough, she says, and none of them realizes that with Lavretsky there in the midst of them, there is one too many. They have been very kind and good to him, but suddenly they do not think of him any more than if he were not in the world, as indeed he was not in their world. This says the whole, or will say it to those who are old enough to know that there was ever that heart-breakingly beautiful story: there certainly never was for those who are young enough to like the stories of nowadays.

A good old age need not be arrogantly

authoritative in order to be objectionable. It is sufficiently cumbersome, though possibly not molestful without that. Each generation has divinely and naturally the right to round out its cycle in its own way; and every man must be self-taught if he is taught at all. Suppose Cornaro did do these things for the public good on which, however humbly, he prides himself: advised how best to fortify the lagoons and purify them of malaria (no one had yet thought of attacking the mosquito), to drain the swamps of the mainland and irrigate its fields, and to extend the commerce of the city he loved. The question is whether he was not keeping some younger man from his chance of fame and fortune. Were there not youths of forty, fifty, and sixty years in Venice who were as good military and civil engineers, agriculturists, and economists, as this octogenarian, nonogenarian, centenarian, and was he not possibly hindering them from a career of profit and usefulness?

There is much, very much, in such a view of the matter to make the thoughtful reader pause in his purpose of living a hundred years. He will have to ask himself, before he puts it in effect, not only whether he will have a very good time himself, but also whether he will not be spoiling the good time which others would like to have, if he continues in a world already sufficiently crowded and constantly becoming more crowded. He will be forgotten if he goes, but he stands a chance of becoming a not unattractive portion of race-history; if he stays he will be forgotten except at those odious moments when he is found in the way. We can promise he will enjoy these moments (unless he is of a different sort of reader from the sort we prefer to fancy) no more than the hungry generation that cannot scruple to tread him down will enjoy them.

Then there is another point which he must consider before entering upon the "sober life" which leads to the long life. It may be all very well for him to weigh his meat and drink, and not let them daily exceed twenty-six ounces together; that may conduce to health and self-respect; it may save him in doctor's as well as butcher's bills. It may be wise; but is it natural? Is not it natural

rather to eat more than is good for you of things that are bad for you? It seems to be taken for granted that gluttony is a denial of the innate wisdom of the animals; but is it so? What horse was ever kept out of a field of green oats by prudential considerations? What cow from a surfeit of green corn? The sheep, innocent and irreproachable as it otherwise is, subjects itself to terrific colics by its unwise excesses; and we all know what the pig is, though it has often been held up as an example because it neither chews nor smokes tobacco. The very bee, the type of sober industry, notoriously gets drunk on cider if it can get the cider.

We would be needlessly alarming as to the danger possibly attendant on the general diffusion of a new edition of the good old Cornaro's famous work. Man will not so readily change his nature as might be conjectured. In spite of knowing (though not realizing) that he will live something less than a hundred years, if he keeps on guttling and guzzling as at present, he will probably keep on. Even if he could easily change his gluttonous nature, which he shares with all the animals, he would still have to change his habits, and that is a much more formidable undertaking. Merely to shun the convivial board would perhaps be more than he was equal to. Doubtless many a reformer who has eaten too much breakfast would follow Cornaro to the end if it were not for being asked somewhere to luncheon or dinner, where any sort of self-denial would be a sort of offence. But as it is we think the treatise of the Venetian sage can be read with comparative impunity, and we can safely commend it, even at this late day, for the charm of its quaint sincerity, since few are likely to act upon its instruction. The world may be always trusted not to take wisdom seriously. Otherwise the best books would be as bad as the best man, if they lived long enough, and we should, from time to time, have to collect them in Alexandrian libraries and get some humane Omar to burn them; lest the fine balance of good and evil should be unduly disturbed, and the play between them in which the soul finds its freedom should be lost through a universal and final reformation of the species.



## Editor's Study.

WHICH is the more beautiful and more worthy thought: that our planet and the solar system of which it is a part—to us the most interesting part—belong to a celestial brotherhood by a kinship so intimate that no one member can cherish an invidious distinction over any other; or that the earth is the central object of the Creator's regard, pivotal in the Universal Plan, the only dwelling-place of living souls?

The question does not occur to us in any astronomical connection, such as Alfred Wallace has presented in his recent book, and which our neighbor of the Easy Chair in the preceding number made the basis of interestingly suggestive speculations, having in view the bearing upon human beliefs—upon the human consciousness itself—of that central location which Dr. Wallace assigns to our solar system, together with the absence of any definite proof of the habitability of other worlds.

The matter of location is not so impressive—since it is constantly shifting—as is the position of the earth as the only habitable world in the universe, if that position could be established. It is known that only within certain limits of temperature—an infinitesimally small arc of the whole cycle of evolution—can organic life exist on any planet. But suppose the earth to have fairly entered upon this narrow field of interesting possibilities, according to the scientific theory held a generation ago there could have been no emergence of life. *Omne vivum ex vivo* was a firmly established maxim. From non-living matter no life could be evolved. Given a bit of protoplasm, and the glorious possibility might be realized. Whence finally did come this precious legacy? Lord Kelvin suggested that the earth owed this endowment to a meteoric visitation. How precarious the condition preliminary to so vast a sequel! But if life was thus alien to the earth, her child by adoption only, then it must have been mothered somewhere—in some of those vast regions which are now supposed to be absolutely sterile.

Of course this dilemma disappears when, in the course of investigations now being pursued, the distinction between living and non-living matter is abolished. Then also it will be seen that when on any planet the permissive conditions exist, organic life in its entire series of evolutions is inevitable. It would be a rash conclusion of science that only on a single planet can these conditions exist.

But, as we have said, our purpose is not to consider the effect of any astronomical theory or of any scientific hypothesis concerning matter, organic or inorganic, upon human speculation as to man's place and destiny in this universe. We wish rather to call the reader's attention to some ancient imaginations about the earth in that long period—far longer than that of which we have a definite record—when human thought and feeling were so inseparable from external appearances that man and the world moved in one current, and any analysis that should separate them would have seemed as impossible as it would have been deemed unnatural.

### I

Another book, quite different from Dr. Wallace's—*The Plea of Pan*, by Henry W. Nevinson, published three years ago—has diverted our thoughts from modern analyses and definitions into this old field. Mr. Nevinson has the sense of the souls in things, as Pater had, a quicker sense indeed, though not so subtle or so richly cultivated. Indeed, any comparison of this writer—so objective, so boldly assertive, so virile always—with one like Pater, who shunned positive definition, who was so sensitive to adumbrations, tentatively depicting the shadows that haunted him, yet always with a luminous intellectual transparency, would not suggest itself to us except for this one book of Mr. Nevinson's and some of his critical essays, and in these only because they show remarkable power of imaginative interpretation. How projective and synthetic his method is in this interpretation is indicated by the fact that instead of shyly courting