Love and Cups

The cup within *Floris and Blanchflour* is a prized possession that changes hands repeatedly before and during the narrative. The cup is impeccably beautiful, made of gold and silver, with an enormous garnet seated on the knob such that, “in all the world there is no cellar so deep that it would not light the way for the butler to fill both ale and wine”. In other words, the gem is large and radiant enough to act as a sort of beacon, providing light even when surrounded by darkness - this may metaphorically tie into the radiance and purity of beauty that the cup is to represent. The quality of the materials aside, the cup is perhaps even *more* famous for its history of owners, and the scene that it depicts on its lid. The scene is one of, “how Paris led away the queen, and the love of both of them”, referring to Paris and Helen of Troy and Sparta respectively. Legend has it that Paris had won favor from Aphrodite by judging her the most beautiful, and is promised the love of the most beautiful women of the Earth as his reward. Therefore, the cup has been associated with immense beauty from its very beginning. Thus begins the long and bloody history associated with the cup - King Aeneas seizes it during his siege of Troy, who give it to Julius Caesar, from whom it is stolen by the thief of our tale. The cup is exchanged for the life of Blancheflour near the beginning, and for the rest of the story, Floris intends to use the cup’s great value to help win back his love. In this sense the cup acts as a temporary substitute for Blancheflour, a physical representation of the pure and beautiful love shared between the children. The cup serves Floris well, and is ultimately “lost” in order to “win” the trust of the Porter, whose help was needed to penetrate the numerous defenses of the emir’s tower - unlike his father, Floris trades the cup not for Blancheflour herself, but an opportunity to rescue her. This suggests that, to Floris at least, Blancheflour’s worth exceeds that of the material value of the cup.