

sented a company of ministers seated about a table with their pipes, presumably discussing weighty topics of theology. A river was somehow introduced into the picture, as well as six swans and the White Mountains, which loom up in the distance. The entire affair was more valuable for its antiquity than for artistic merit. Above the picture is an inscription to which Mr. Lowell pointed with the remark: "It is a very good motto." It read: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

We were shown a portrait of Browning, painted by the son of Mr. Lowell's story (the "Story" of his travels).

One of our party spoke to the poet about a sweet face that hung above the mantle in the front study. Mr. Lowell said in reply: "That was Mrs. Lowell." There was a peculiar sadness in the past tense. And then we thought of his first wife, the beautiful and fragile Maria White, herself a poetess, highly gifted and attractive, whose body was too frail to linger long on this earth and whom he laid away after nine years of loving companionship. His home was then a "dead house."

"For it died that autumn morning  
When she, its soul, was borne  
To lie all dark on the hillside  
That looks over woodland and corn."

After some time spent in the study we were shown the entrance hall. There was a clock that had run more than two hundred years, also a brass-bound chest that Mr. Lowell brought from Spain.

The hall is colonial in its style, having ample room and an old-fashioned staircase. The poet praised it as one of the most attractive apartments in his house.

An inspection of the dining room was next in order. Besides the usual furniture of such a place there was a deeply-carved cabinet from Florence, valuable for its antiquity and the exquisite beauty of the workmanship. On the walls were portraits of some of the noted men who had dined in that room, among the number being Thackeray and Thomas Hughes. Mr. Lowell continued talking all the time most delightfully.

When my friend mentioned the fact that he was a Methodist preacher, Mr. Lowell gave us an account of an early New England preacher of that denomination who was mobbed, and afterwards, when asked how he felt, said: "I felt as though God and I were alone in that town."

The poet then told us of the first Methodist preacher he ever met. He was a man who did not advertise his profession or his denominational predilections in his personal appearance. Mr. Lowell said that many years ago this man came to see him about the study of Italian, and had a copy of Renan's "Life of Jesus" under his arm. "I asked him how he came to have an interest in Renan."

"My calling would naturally give me an interest in him," he replied. Pardon me, but may I ask what your calling is?" When Mr. Lowell found that he was a Methodist preacher he said he was glad to see him, for he had never seen one before. The result of that interview was that Mr. Lowell taught him Italian and afterwards Spanish. This incident shows the hospitality of Mr. Lowell's nature.

It was difficult to leave when we felt that we had stayed as long as we ought. Mr. Lowell continued to talk charmingly, detaining us several times when we attempted to leave. Finally, when we were out of the door, he called to us and wished us to notice his elms. He pointed out one which he said was the biggest in the State, "But," he added, "I suppose it is not large to a Californian."

The easy grace and delightful simplicity of the poet in his own home are beyond all praise. He was one of nature's noblemen—too great to be small.—*Epworth Herald.*

## THE HOLY GRAIL.

ONE of the finest of Lowell's poems, and perhaps the best known, is "The Vision of Sir Launfal," which he is said to have dashed off in a kind of inspired ecstasy of forty-eight hours, scarcely eating or sleeping. The poem is a great Christian parable.

Sir Launfal was a knight of the North Country, who made a vow to travel over sea and land in search of the Holy Grail. Before he departs he sleeps, and in the dreams of the night he sees a vision of what is and what will be. As from the proudest hall in the North Countree Sir Launfal flashed forth in his unscarred mail, he saw a leper crouching by his gate, "who begged with his hand and moaned as he sate." A loathing came over Sir Launfal; for this man, so foul and bent, seemed a blot on the summer morn. "So he tossed him a piece of gold in scorn." Years seemed to pass. Sir Launfal, old and grey, returns from his weary quest, to find his heir installed in his place. The senechal rudely turns him away from his own gate.

Little he recked of his carlism's loss,  
No more on his surcoat was blazoned the cross,  
But deep in his soul the sign he wore,  
The badge of the suffering and the poor.

As Sir Launfal sits down in the snow outside and muses of summer chimes, he hears once more the leper's voice, "For Christ's sweet sake, I beg no alms." Sir Launfal turns to the sound and sees again "the gruesome thing," the leper cowering beside him lone and white, "as the ice isles of the northern seas, in the desolate horror of his disease."

And Sir Launfal said, "I behold in thee  
An image of Him who died on a tree;  
Thou hast also had thy crown of thorns;  
Thou hast also had the world's buffets and scorn—  
And to thy life were not denied  
The wounds in the hands and feet and side;  
Mild Mary's Son, acknowledge me;  
Behold, through him, I give to thee!"

So he parted in twain his single crust,  
and broke the ice on the streamlet's brink,  
and gave the leper to eat and drink. Then lo, a wondrous transformation!

As Sir Launfal mused with a downcast face,  
A light shone round about the place;  
The leper no longer crouched at his side,  
But stood before him glorified,  
Shining and tall and fair and straight  
As the pillar that stood by the Beautiful Gate,—  
Himself the Gate whereby men can  
Enter the temple of God in Man.  
And the voice that was calmer than silence  
said,  
"Lo, it is I, be not afraid!"

In many climes without avail,  
Thou hast spent thy life for the Holy Grail;  
Behold, it is here—this cup which thou  
Didst fill at the streamlet for me but now;  
This crust is my body broken for thee,  
This water His blood that died on the tree;  
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,  
In whatsoever we share with another's need;  
Not what we give, but what we share—  
For the gift with-out the giver is bare;  
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,  
Himself, his hungering neighbor and me."

The sequel tells how Sir Launfal woke from his dream explaining that "The Grail in my castle here is found."

## LOWELL AND THE BIBLE.

BY WILLIAM D. MURRAY.

LOWELL'S letters are looked upon as good literature, and were written by a man who gave himself to general literature. It is interesting to see how they are fairly saturated with the Bible and to learn from them how much influence the Bible must have had in forming Lowell's delightful style. The direct quotations are not numerous—a dozen, perhaps; it is rather that the Bible words and phrases and figures have become a part of the warp and woof of his writings. At least 125 references from twenty-five different books of the Bible can be found in the Letters, and these are not merely from the familiar books as Genesis and the Gospels, nor such use of Bible similes as is found in every writer; but he goes to Samuel, Kings, Joel, Jeremiah, Romans and Revelations. The references, too, many of them, show an intimate knowledge of Scripture, as if he had maintained his resolution of 1837, "I mean to read next term, if possible, a chapter in my Bible every night."

## LOWELL'S ADVICE ABOUT READING.

AMONG the letters of James Russell Lowell is one to a young lady who had asked his advice in regard to certain studies. His reply is so inspiring to those whose opportunities are limited, so suggestive to everyone who wishes to make the most and best of himself, that no one can afford to miss it.

"The advantage of study, I suspect, is not in the number of things we learn by it, but simply that it teaches us the one thing worth knowing—not what, but how, to think. Nobody can learn that from other people; but I am inclined to think that one may get a reasonably good education out of any first-rate book, if read in the right way. Take Dante or Milton, for example. If you like or dislike a passage, insist with yourself on knowing the reason why. You are already unconsciously learning rhetoric in the best way. Then ask yourself what is contemporary and what perdurable in his theology, and the like. You are not only studying the history of his time, but also, what is vastly more important, learning to look with deeper insight at that of your own time. You see what I mean. If all roads lead to Rome, so do all roads lead out of Rome to every province of thought. What one wants is to enlarge his mind and make it charitable and capable of instruction and enjoyment from many sides. When one has learned that, he has begun to be wise."