

Notes on
The Last Supper
A Noted Painting by Leonardo da Vinci
in the Refectory adjacent to the Church of S. M. delle Grazie,
Milan

Transcribed by Earl C. Davis from
Lafayette Charles Loomis
*The Index Guide to Travel and Art-Study in Europe: A Compendium
of Geographical, Historical, and Artistic Information for the
Use of Americans, Alphabetically Arranged*

New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882, pp. 188-189.

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The picture was executed 1496-98. It suffered constantly from the smoke of the adjoining kitchen, and, in 1500, the room appears to have been flooded. Even as early as 1642, Scanelli says it was difficult to discover the subjects. In 1652, the monks opened a doorway through the wall, cutting out portions of the central part. In 1726, Bellotte, "an indifferent artist," and in 1770, Mazza, "a wretched dauber," RESTORED (!) the picture. In 1796 the cavalry of Napoleon (against his express order) occupied it as a stable; in 1800 it was again flooded; in 1807, Viceroy Eugene took effective measures for the preservation of the picture. Nothing, however, prevents its gradual flaking off the walls. It has been retouched and restored so often "that little or nothing remains of Leonardo, save the composition and the forms generally." "Of the heads there is not one untouched, and many are totally ruined. Fortunately, that of the Christ is the most pure, being but faintly retouched." The original cartoons are at Weimar, Ger.

The disciples are divided into two groups of three each, on either side of Christ. ON HIS

RIGHT the first person is John, with head bowed and clasped hands. Next [to] him is Judas, in profile, with the money-bag in his right hand, and the overturned dish of salt against his arm, his left hand approaching the dish, which Christ also is about to touch. Behind Judas is Peter, with his head between Judas and John, and his hand on John's shoulder.

The next group is of Andrew with both hands raised in astonishment. St. James the Less, with likeness of the fact to Christ as indicating relationship, with his hand on Peter's shoulder; and lastly Bartholomew standing, and leaning forward with both hands resting on the table.

ON THE LEFT OF CHRIST, first is James the Greater, who extends both arms in amazement, and behind him is Thomas, with his forefinger raised as if in menace. The third of this group is Philip, with both hands at his breast, and with a mildness of face akin to John's. The next, with both arms extended toward Christ, but looking toward the end of the table, is Matthew, who, with Thaddeus, is intently speaking to Simon sitting at the end of the table, with hands raised.

Of Christ it may be noticed that his left hand is open, as if in supplication, while his right—that toward Judas—is reversed as if in distrust or aversion.

Notwithstanding the multiplied ravages of two centuries, enough yet remains of the grouping and of the individual expression of each of the actors to place this picture in regard to force of conception, harmony of detail, and delicacy of touch, among the finest works ever wrought.