

The Old School Clock.

By John Boyle O'Reilly.

Old memories rush o'er my mind just now
Of faces and friends of the past;
Of that happy time when life's dream was all bright,
E'er the clear sky of youth was o'ercast.
Very dear are those memories,—they've clung round
my heart

And bravely withstood Time's rude shock,
But not one is more hallowed or dear to me now
Than the face of the old school clock.

'Twas a quaint old clock with a quaint old face,
And great iron weights and chain:
It stopped when it liked, and I before it struck
It creaked as if 'twere in pain,
It had seen many years, and it seemed to say,
"I'm one of the real old stock."
To the youthful fry, who with reverence looked
On the face of the old school clock!

How many a time I labored to sketch
That yellow and blue-honored face,
With its basket of flowers, its figures and hands,
And the weights and the chains in their place!
How oft have I gazed with admiring eye,
As I sat on the wooden block,
And peeped and guessed at the wonderful things
That were in that old school clock.

What a terrible frown did the old clock wear
To the truant, who timidly cast
An anxious eye on those merciless hands,
That for him had been moving too fast!
But its frown soon changed, for it loved to smile
On the thoughtless, noisy flock,
And it creaked and whirled and struck with glee—
Did that genial, good-humored old clock.

Well, years had passed, and my mind was filled
With the world, its cares and ways,
When again I stood in that little school,
Where I passed my boyhood's days.
My old friend was gone! and there hung a thing
That my sorrow seemed to mock,
As I gazed with a tear and a softened heart
At a new-fashioned Yankee clock.

'Tis the way of the world: old friends pass away
And fresh faces arise in the stead;
Huz st! 'mid the din and hustle of life
We cherish fond thoughts of the dead,
Yes, dearly those memories cling round my heart,
And bravely withstand Time's rude shock;
But not one is more dear or more hallowed to me
Than the face of that old school clock.

A FAMOUS PICTURE.

Leonardo Da Vinci's "Last Supper."

Near the western gate, the Porta Magenta, of Milan, is the old Dominican convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, and upon the wall at one end of the refectory, covering a space twenty-eight feet long, is the remnant of the picture known as Leonardo da Vinci's "Cena," or "Cenacolo," or, more generally by English-speaking people, as the "Last Supper."

The Italian name comes from the Latin *cena*, the principal and latest meal of the Romans, corresponding to our late dinner, or the substantial supper of earlier days.

Although this subject was used by Italian Artists before Leonardo's time, including Giotto, and by Del Sarto, Ghirlandajo and Raffaello, among his contemporaries, and was appropriately employed in the decoration of conventual refectories, it was reserved for his composition to be universally accepted as the typical "Lord's Supper," and it has become the best known representation of this, if not of all religious subjects. If this seems questionable, let any educated person consider how completely his own conception of the scene is based upon that of the great Florentine artist.

But the most singular circumstance concerning Leonardo's masterpiece is, that though its fame has been growing through all the years since it was finished, it practically ceased to exist three centuries ago, and the fame of its original excellence maintained in the beginning by various early copies, and later by the engraving of Raffaello Sanzio Morghen and its reproductions, would seem to insure it a unique immortality. In its latest condition, to use an Eastern metaphor, it is but "the dream of a shadow," and the shadow is nothing more than the remains of successive so-called restorations. Not a brush mark of Leonardo can be verified to-day.

The exact history of the picture, involving the dates of its beginning and

completion, is open to question, the time during which it was in progress, as stated by various writers, varying from less than four to more than sixteen years. It was probably finished in 1497 to 1498, as a letter to Lodovico Sforza, the reigning Duke of Milan, the artist's patron, dated 1498, alludes to it as completed. Mrs. Heaton's estimate of less than four years is simply incredible, remembering Leonardo's apertious and dilatory habits, and the fact that he had single portraits in hand for years; considering also the scale of the picture, the number and size of the figures, and the difficulties of wall painting. Moreover, there are no indications that he had much assistance. Vasari's story of the impatience of the prior, and his statement concerning Leonardo's failure to satisfy himself as regards the Saviour's head and his conclusion not to finish it, point equally to prolonged labours, lasting probably ten years at the least.

Unfortunately for himself and probably for posterity, Leonardo was a born inventor and experimenter, and like many another artist, built what should have been his lasting monument upon quicksands. In the case of the Lord's Supper, dreading perhaps the continuous harassing labour and uncertainty of fresco painting, and always preferring oil, he determined to make use of it, and what was worse, to prepare his ground according to an improved theory of his own; saturating a plaster surface laid upon an altogether unsuitable stone wall with some resinous substance melted over or into it; afterwards priming with white lead and earthy colours.

The consequence may be gathered from occasional records which indicate the condition of the picture from time to time. Thus, according to one account, the refectory being flooded in 1500, the painting was first injured by dampness only two years after its completion. Yet, as Francis I. saw it in 1515 with such admiration that he sought for someone who would undertake the impossible feat of removing it to France, it could not have been seriously impaired.

But in 1540 it was declared to be half destroyed, and in 1584 we are told it was well-nigh ruined by dampness, by fading and smoke from the neighbouring kitchen. However, in 1642 mention is again made of its ruinous condition, indicating that former accounts must have exaggerated injuries which, after a century, had yet left something of the original painting.

Ten years later, the monks, had a door cut, the upper part of which destroyed the edge of the tablecloth, the Saviour's feet and the floor under the table, and led to the cracking and chipping off of adjacent surfaces.

In 1726 the brotherhood, either enlightened as to the general interest in their precarious treasure, or disliking its shabby appearance, employed one Belcchi, an artist unknown save in this infamous connection, to "restore" it, which he accomplished by concealing himself and his operations behind a screen and repainting everything but the bit of distant sky.

As if this were not enough, in 1778 a *protege* of the then Governor of Milan, named Mezza, was authorized to try his hand upon the group, leaving only three heads intact, which he was not allowed to touch, so disastrous was the result of his labours elsewhere in the picture. It is said he began by covering everything with a neutral tint by way of glaze.

Next came war in 1796, and Napoleon's troops, despite orders to the contrary, used the refectory as a stable, and the Apostles' heads served as marks for missiles. In 1800 excessive rains and defective drainage once more partly submerged the refectory. In 1807 Eugene de Beauharnois, Napoleon's stepson, then Viceroy of Italy, appealed to by Bossi, secretary of the

Milan Academy, gave orders that everything possible should be done to avert further damage, and Bossi himself drew a full size cartoon, which was executed in mosaic, copied the painting in oils and wrote a book concerning it, which last led to Goethe's well known critical essay.

Let it be added, that a final repainting by Barozzi was permitted as late as 1858, and it will be seen that what we call Leonardo's Last Supper is in effect a composite picture impressed upon the world's mental retina, the product of several different personalities, of whom the master is only the chief. An honourable place belongs to the earliest copyists, and to Raffaello Morghen, for whose superb engraving, begun in 1797, three hundred years after the completion of the original, a careful drawing was made by Matteina, who studied the available early copies of Leonardo's pupils, Oggione and Luini, one or more of the former being made shortly after the painting was finished. Leonardo's drawings for the heads of the Apostles, now in Russia, may also have been studied in this connection. In short, whatever may have been the peculiar characteristics of Leonardo's work in its integrity, it is quite beyond our power to judge of it, except through the eyes of successive copyists and "restorers," and when we read such words as these, in Mrs. Jameson's *Sacred and Legendary Art*, to the effect that in 1848, or thereabouts, "The work of his hand is perishing—will soon have perished," we can not but smile, thinking that, for once, the quick Hibernian imagination has proved too strong for the conscientious critic. There can be no doubt, however, that the persistence of Leonardo's thought and spirit, notwithstanding the decay and fragmentary character of too much of his work, is the best evidence of its strong original power and charm.

The composition of the "Last Supper," as we now know it, is all Leonardo's, and the division of the company of the disciples into groups of three, each different and yet each in some sort repeating yet varying the emotions and gestures proper to all, has always been highly praised, and the sympathetic parallelism of outlines and the carefully equalized distribution and balance of masses are characteristic of the subtle intellectualism of the Renaissance. The same subject by contemporary hands nevertheless, too often shows a level line of heads above the monotonous plane of the table, the effect of which is far from agreeable.

The table furniture, the carefully creased cloth, and the trestles, we are told by Goethe, were closely copied from those used by the monks. The realism of our day would, doubtless, lead to one or more of the disciples being placed between the spectator and the table, to the detriment of eye-pleasure and the interruption of the apparent magnetic current of feeling which powerfully moves every figure. Yet it is this engrossing spectacle which prevents us from dwelling on the difficulty of seating in comfort eleven persons upon one side of the board and from considering over-critically the possibly too artificial scheme of grouping.

Ghirlandajo, though not with realistic intent, but to bring Judas near enough to the dish in front of Christ without giving him a place of honour, has seated him alone on the spectators' side of the table, but not to the benefit of the composition. As for Leonardo, whoever has seen the hasty but spirited sketch of the Windsor collection, an experiment with the same idea knows that it was not from lack of thought that he finally ranged his little company behind and at the end of the table.

The head of Jesus was naturally the vital centre of the picture, and, fortunately, the original pencil drawing in

the Brera Museum, at Milan, remains to show that whether Leonardo left it unfinished or not upon the wall he had a very definite conception of how he would have it. It has not the tranquil beauty of Oggione's head. Nor of Morghen's, but rather that of Him who has uttered those pathetic words: "He that dippeth his hand with Me in the dish, the same shall betray Me."

Next to Christ, on his right, is St. John, whose too womanly face and air of gentle reverie, as seen in the engravings, falls short of the commonly received ideal of the beloved disciple, Peter, behind Judas, urges John to interrogate Jesus, and grasps his bread-knife as if it were a sword. Judas, the purse-bearer, panic-struck, overtur the salt, thus symbolizing misfortune. Andrew raises both his hands in amazement, while James the Less lays his hand on Peter's shoulder, repeating, with a difference, the latter's energetic movement; and Bartholomew, at the end of the table, rises and leans earnestly forward. On the left of the Saviour, St. James, major, with extended arms, expresses horror, and Thomas holds up a fore-finger. Philip, with hands upon his breast, thus silently manifests his devotion. Matthew turns in the opposite direction, addressing Simon as if to say, "listen," but his hands are in harmony with the general movement, which is directed towards the Saviour. Jude, otherwise Thaddeus, sits next Matthew and is about to let one hand fall with emphasis upon the other. Finally, Simon, perplexed, with both hands held out before him, seems to exclaim, "What can this mean?"

We cannot know what was Leonardo's scheme of colour, but judging by his pictures which remains and by those of his school, including necessarily Oggione's copies, it was a quiet harmony of rich, dark colours, relieved by the lighter tunces of some of the figures, the gray tones of the tablecloth and the aerial hues of the distant hills and sky. It is hard to imagine even such a story as this better told, or with more dignity and directness.

The spirit of vulgar literalism which might have created a scene of melodramatic panic and which has, in some instances, as in Titian's *Cenacolo*, made use of domestic animals, servants, and commonplace accessories, are here altogether absent; and the severe simplicity of the architectural perspective and the sleeping landscape seen through the window, making as it were a luminous halo around the head of Christ, equally lend themselves to the serious purpose of the great artist; he who has been sometimes regarded as a magnificent failure, and appears most magnificent in this, the noblest of all his failures, which to day is not even a picture, but a tradition.—*W. H. Winstow in Arcadia.*

To all Athletes.

A member of the Liverpool, Eng., Harriers, Mr. William Pagan, writes as follows: "I believe St. Jacobs Oil to be the best thing ever used for curing and preventing soreness and swelling of the cords and muscles after severe exercise. Having used the Oil myself and knowing other members of the club who use no other remedy after their exercises and races. I have no hesitation in recommending it to all athletes."

A representative meeting was held in Sligo, on January 19th, to protest against the excessive railway rates imposed by the Midland Great Western and Great Northern lines. The Mayor, Mr. Thomas Scanlan, presided. Resolutions were passed condemning the action of the railway companies in imposing exorbitant rates on traders; and a committee was named to make inquiries as to the possibility of chartering steamers to convey goods from Dublin to Sligo.

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