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Bought from G.W. Walpole list Cl/215, no. 19.



FRANCOYS DEFRAGE  
PREMIER DE CENSI-MAGE  
DE XXIII ANS.

A SHORT  
**ADDRESS**  
TO THE  
**AMATEURS OF ANCIENT PAINTINGS;**  
SHEWING  
*The Authorities, in Proof of the Originality,*  
OF THAT  
INESTIMABLE, SUBLIME, & UNIQUE  
**Painting,**

CERTAINLY THE LAST, FROM THE PENCIL OF THAT REAL  
FATHER OF THE ART,

**LEONARDO DA VINCI:**

The Subject **ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST**, with his usual Attributes;  
under which Character he has pourtrayed

*Francis the First of France, at the Age of 24.*

---

By **H. C. ANDREWS,**  
BOTANICAL PAINTER, ENGRAVER, &c.

*London Gallery, 22, Piccadilly.*

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As this is the only, existing, perfect Specimen, which can be  
identified, as the Production of this great Artist, Mr. ANDREWS  
submits it to the Publick, with an Appeal to the test of the severest  
ordeal of Criticism.

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**London:**

PRINTED FOR T. COPE, CASTLE STREET, LONG ACRE.

1814.





# AN ADDRESS,

&c. &c. &c.

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**A**LREADY have the Publick, by my last year's Catalogue of Pictures, been, in part, made acquainted with the character of that most invaluable relick of Art, the Portrait of Francis the First of France, painted by Leonardo da Vinci. I now come forward, to challenge the world to produce a Painting of equal merit, with equally substantiated proofs for its antiquity and identity, in reference to its Author.

That a more open, free, and critical examen might be made of its originality, I have exhibited it, publickly, more than twelve months in my Gallery; and I can now assert that no one, real judge, has hitherto questioned it's authenticity; although some doubts have been hinted, not from the character of the painting, but arising from recorded evidence only, in the life of Da Vinci; which, I hope, I have the means entirely to do away; more

completely so, than could such objections, in any other instance. For, however most of those pictures, said to be of the age of this, and attributed to Raphael, Michael Angiolo, Correggio, &c. may come to us, with all their registered seals, proofs, and marks, by which their identity is warranted; it will, I believe, be allowed by those persons conversant in the History of Painters and Paintings, that no picture of any of the great masters, produced in the early part of the Sixteenth Century, but what has been often closely copied, either as studies, or for sale, by most of the best artists of the successive Italian schools; many, 'tis true, have even improved upon the originals; and that these, or such copies, good and bad, were the specimens sold by the Italian Cognoscenti. So attached are they, to the original works of those first masters of the art, their countrymen, that money could scarce ever purchase them; but, if ever it happened, the price demanded was enormous. Many recorded anecdotes might be adduced on this head.

To assert, therefore, that this picture does possess both external and internal evidence, of its originality, above all others, which are attributed to Leonardo, or any other painter of that age, may appear somewhat bold; but, I have no fear, to the scrutinizing mind of the true critic, I shall be able to bring home my proofs, with full and satisfactory conviction.

I shall begin, first, with the chief objection which has been started by Mr. West, Mr. Cosway, and others, (for a fair one it is), that Leonardo never painted at all in France, though he lived there nearly two years; and this, grounded on an assertion of Vassari, in his *Life of Da Vinci*; from whence it has been transcribed, by most of the succeeding biographers.

Du Fresne, however, says, that Leonardo finished a picture, *in France*, from a drawing he had formerly made; and gives the subject, Our Saviour with his Mother, St. Ann, and St. John. De Piles, likewise, 120 years ago, in his sketch of the life of this artist, thus hints at his occupations in France.—“He was well received, in France, by Francis the First, where, by his presence and his *works*, he supported the reputation he had acquired; and the King, in consequence, gave him all possible tokens of esteem and friendship.”

Vassari's *Lives of the painters* was not published at Florence, till nearly forty years after the death of Da Vinci; and, as Vassari never had been in France, he could but have had hearsay evidence, as to Leonardo's labours in that country. It may be, undoubtedly, admitted, that ill health, and bodily infirmities incident to a man, more than seventy years of age, might be a bar to his executing many pictures, after his leaving Italy. But it will,

I think, scarce admit of a doubt, that any artist would denominate himself, as Leonardo did, in his will, made in the year 1518, and renewed in 1519, *Painter to the King*, until he had complied with the first, most essential, and common induction to his office, that of making the Portrait of his Patron, so necessary a point of etiquette; especially with Kings, that the Emperor Charles the Fifth, upon a like appointment, of Tiziano the Venetian, to a similar post, had his portrait taken five times, by him; and upon which, Charles is said to have complimented the artist, by telling him, his paintings had five times made him immortal!

What need then to wonder at the tale, told us, attending the death of Da Vinci, of his dying in the arms of Francis? when, from the discovery of this picture, the mystery is unravelled. By a bold, and happy allusion, the king is, figuratively raised, by the painter, next to divinity.

What an offering to the vanity of so religious a prince, and in that age, when religion held its most powerful influence on the human mind. So sweet the incense of flattery, so attractive its power, and so certain the result, if properly applied!

No doubt I might rest the case, without danger, on the internal evidence of the picture itself; from the superior merits and characteristic beauties, only

attributable to this artist, and only to be found here, as sufficient authority, to warrant its originality. But I, fortunately, possess external evidence to prove, that Leonardo *did paint the Portrait of Francis the First, and that in France; as it was impossible he could have done it elsewhere.*

When Francis made his debut in Italy, in the year 1515, the first of his reign; Da Vinci was at Rome, under the auspices of Leo X. then Pope, and the declared enemy of the French monarch. Francis made but a short stay in Italy, and Leonardo did not go to France till three years after 1518, partly at the entreaty of Francis, and partly from the disgust he had taken at the attention shewn, by the Pontiff, to his declared rival, then a youth, Michael Angiolo.

The document I have, proving the fact, beyond a doubt, is a book published in the year 1670, at Paris, by a Mr. Willson, from the notes of Mr. Richard Lassells, who had travelled through Italy, five different times, as tutor to several noblemen; the last, Lord Waterford, to whom the book is dedicated. In this work, the record, of this picture's existence, is stated, in the second part, page 177; where, mentioning the curiosities he had seen, at the different palaces in the environs of Rome, he there says, at the Villa Ludonisia, in a neat little closet, full of divers rarities, he was shewn—

*“ the true picture of Francis the First of France,  
 “ with that, also, of his Physitian, both by Lorenzo  
 “ Vinci, and esteemed rare pieces.”*

'Tis true, a cavil might here arise, upon the Christian name; but it so happens, that a misnomer, (which is singular enough), previously occurs, but different, in the first part of the same work, page 125; where Mr. Lassels, in mentioning the famous picture, in the Dominican's refectory at Milan, now nearly lost, as a painting of Da Vinci, thus directs his pupil;—*“ But you must not omit  
 “ to see the refectory here, where you shall finde,  
 “ an admirable picture, of the Last Supper, made  
 “ by, rare, Laurentius Vincius.”* Thus, there can be no doubt who is meant by the author in both places,

From such testimony, I think, we must determine, that the Portrait of Francis was painted by Da Vinci; and, that it did exist, 150 years ago, in Italy; but that, as it has never been lately mentioned, and no copy existing of it, the picture was, like many others, thought to be lost. Nevertheless, I am informed by many Italians, that the picture was well known by name in Italy, and that it is mentioned, by different Italian authors, whose works are not yet in England.

Happy is it, for the lovers of Painting, that this

picture is recovered, as a standard by which to form an opinion of those paintings, attributed to this great man ; as well as to be able to contemplate on what is truly great, in this divine art ; for, who is there, either artist or amateur, that can look at it without emotion ? That sublime conception of the composition, as an historical picture, must enforce applause ; where, from a single trait of the pencil, the artist has, by the imposition of the finger of St. John on the lamb, typified the whole mystery of our Redemption ; as if he would say, *Behold the Lamb of God, &c.*

The singular and exquisite painting, of the eyes, seen in no paintings but Leonardo's ; the bold and grand gousto, exhibited in the outline of the arms and hands ; the true principle of the clair-scurio in the colouring ; the beautiful and correct figure of the Lamb, than which no truer or more sweetly finished a portrait, of an animal, was ever painted ; a talent exclusively attributed, in his day, to Da Vinci ; and in which, if we may judge from this specimen, he has never yet been rivalled.

Another objection was, the board, on which the picture is painted being oak ; and therefore, according to the common-place of picture-dealers, must be German. Da Vinci was an Italian, and his works, if on pannel, should be on plane tree. But this point of objection is, fortunately, the best



argument in its favor ; for, had the picture been on plane tree, I should have doubted its originality, with all its merits, as the production of Leonardo ; so certain is it, as I have already shewn, Da Vinci could never have seen Francis in Italy. But the pannel being of oak ; and that wood, the common growth of the Forest of Fontainbleau, and not plane tree, we may readily suppose, the painter did not send to Italy for a board, on which to paint the King's portrait. Indeed, the most indisputable and corroborative collateral evidence, are the characters which particularize the pannel and its frame ; both of which are of the same wood, and to judge by the grain, from the same tree ; they are both highly impregnated with oil, are extremely heavy, and the pannel, the thickness of those made of plane tree ; or, nearly, thrice the thickness of the German boards.

On the frame is carved, at bottom, the year in which it was made, 1518, and at top, an F ; but whether in reference to the King's name, or to the Palace of Fontainbleau, his favorite residence, where the picture was originally placed, and where the frame had, and has many fellows, is a question ; but I think the last.

On the face of the painting, and engrafted with it, so hard as not to be stirred by the sharpest tool, is painted, in letters of gold, the chronology of the

age of the monarch, at the time the portrait was taken ; as shewn on the engraving. Thus :—

FRANCOYS. R. DE FRANCE.

PREMIER. DE. CE. NOM. A. AGE.

DE. XXIII. ANS.

Corresponding, exactly, with the date, 1518, on the frame ; for, in that year, Francis was exactly twenty-four years of age ; and in which year, Leonardo went to France ; when, only, he could have painted this picture.

I think it will not be difficult to account for the migration of the works of so famous an Italian painter, from France to Italy ; the only country where the fine arts were sought for, or cultivated with enthusiasm, at the close of the sixteenth century. As from accidents, in process of time, most things estimable, have shifted their places, or been consumed by it ; why may we not admit, that the works of this artist, which were always so rare, as well as many others, in the superbe collections formed by Francis, and now lost ? Why, I say, might not these precious relicks, have been sold, to some Italian Prince, during the fifteen years of plunder, pillage and convulsion, which devastated France, previous to the accession of Henry the Fourth ? a period, much similar in its character, to that experienced in England, about sixty years

after, during the latter part of the reign of our first Charles, and till the accession of Charles the Second. A revulsion so barbarous, as indeed are all revolutions, was equally fatal to all our Royal collections ; most of the finest pictures, collected by that unfortunate monarch, were then sold for a trifle, to enrich the Spanish and French palaces.

That there should exist so few of the finished real works, of this artist, (for of the nominal there are abundance) it will be sufficient to quote, what has been recorded, as the leading features, in the life of this great artist, by all his biographers ; from Vasari, till the last of Rigaud, edited by Hawkins.

His ambition and genius led him, from his earliest days, to become more than a painter ; he was architect, musician, mechanic, chymist, author, and projector. How much, therefore, must such various avocations, have called him off, from the accomplishment of many finished pieces ; when it is said, he spent four years on a single face. This, however, I think must be admitted with due allowance ; the picture might be by him four years, in finishing ; but, that an active mind, like his, could spend so much time, entirely, on so trifling a subject, is not possible. It only leads us to judge, that his works were always scarce, even in his life time ; and that he never produced, as his, any piece, but such as he could acknowledge without a blush.

I shall not contend but many of his pictures were higher finished, though not of greater merit, than the one under consideration.

But to say, what labor might have been bestowed on this, from its extreme age, is impossible; yet, I should rather think, his bodily infirmities, at the time it was painted, prevented his finishing it after his usual fashion.

Reasoning, likewise, by analogy, these premises may be allowed, from the paucity of original specimens, now existant, of his cotemporaries, Michael Angiolo and Correggio; the first of whom was, likewise, an architect and sculptor; whose Last Judgment, &c. in the Chapel of Sextus Quintus, and the Cupolo, of the Domo at Parma, painted by the last; are, like the Last Supper of our author, with a very few exceptions, the only authenticated remains, which have been allowed, as the real productions, in painting, of these great masters, for the last 150 years.

These, it is true, are identified by the scite, and the immobility of the materials on which they are painted. Francis the first, upon his second visit to Italy, is said to have actually projected the idea, of removing the Last Supper to France, from his love and reverence for the artist; but, it was found impracticable. Of other masters, such as Raphael,

Parmegiano, Tiziano, &c. many original and authentic pieces are extant; of others, such as Giorgione, Giulio Romano, &c. they are equally scarce; but of pictures, truly original, by any of the great Italian masters, few were seen, out of Italy, until the late subversion of the government, of that country, by the French.

I have no hesitation in declaring, I purchased the picture in London; and not, as has been reported, when I was last on the Continent; from whence, however, it must have found its way, surreptitiously, I fear; but, under such circumstances, as not to be recognised by, those pretended *Cognoscenti*, the dealers in pictures; whose knowledge, seldom goes beyond the board or the canvas; yet, as they find they have lost a prize, they have taken every means, *in their power*, to decry, and depreciate this wonderful performance. But, alas! its merits cry out, “trumpet tongued,” louder than their clamor.

With two Quotations, made from two very different characters, I shall conclude this Essay; the one an ancient Painter of the first class, and the other, a modern critic; Editor, of that part, of a celebrated weekly paper, which comes under the head, *the fine arts*; and this, certainly not a paid-for advertisement; for I must own, that I had never heard of the gentleman, or seen the paper in

question, until it was put into my hands, a short time since; but, for which I here, as I have no other mode, make my acknowledgments to Mr. Hunt, for his energetic, bold, yet rather hyperbolic, critique. My intention, in this, is to shew in what estimation, all persons of judgment, whether artists or amateurs, ancients or moderns, have ever held, the transcendent abilities of this great Genius.

First, from Rubens; where endeavouring to point out, the beauties and mind exhibited in Leonardo's paintings, he bursts forth into this rapturous and enthusiastic language:—"By the heat of his fancy, as well as the solidity of his judgment, he raised Divine things by human; and understood how to give men those different degrees, that elevate them, to the character of Heroes. He knew how to give, every object, the most proper, the most speculative, and the most agreeable character that was possible, and exalted that of *Majesty, even to Divinity.*"

In the Examiner for June the 6th, 1813, the critique runs thus. "After leaving the Reynolds Gallery, where, upon the whole, I received a good deal of pleasure; not feeling that I had quite had my fill of Paintings, I stumbled upon a picture in Piccadilly (No. 22, I think), which purports to be a portrait of Francis the First by Leonardo da Vinci. Heavens what a difference!

“ It is but a portrait as most of those I had been  
 “ seeing ; but placed by them it would kill them,  
 “ swallow them up as Moses’s rod the other rods.  
 “ Where did those old Painters get their models ?  
 “ I see no such figures, not in my dreams, as this  
 “ Francis in the character, or rather with the at-  
 “ tributes of St. John the Baptist. A more than  
 “ mortal majesty in the brow and upon the Eyelid  
 “ —an arm muscular, beautifully formed—the long  
 “ graceful massy fingers compressing, yet so as not  
 “ to hurt, a lamb more lovely, more sweetly shrink-  
 “ ing, than we can conceive that milk-white one  
 “ which followed Una. The picture altogether  
 “ looking as if it were eternal, combining the  
 “ truth of flesh with a promise of permanence like  
 “ marble. Leonardo must have been a stupendous  
 “ Genius ; I can scarce think he has had his full  
 “ fame.”

H. C. ANDREWS,  
 No. 22, PICCADILLY,  
*July 4th, 1814.*











