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Local showers to-day; partly cloudy to-morrow; southerly winds, becoming variable.

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VINCI'S MONNA LISA STOLEN?

AMERICAN SAID TO HAVE GREAT LOUVRE PORTRAIT.

Copy Substituted for Painting, Which Is Also Called "La Joconde"—Paris Paper Alleges Complicity of High Official—Dealers Here Not Surprised.

Special Cable Despatch to THE SUN

PARIS, July 22. The *Cri de Paris* says today that Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece, the "Monna Lisa" portrait, was stolen from the galleries of the Louvre one night about a month ago through the complicity of a high official of the museum. A copy of the painting was put in the frame in place of the original.

The paper asserts that the genuine painting is now in New York. It says that a New York millionaire collector whose initials are J. K. W. W. has the original.

In local art circles the announcement of the reported theft of the "Monna Lisa" was received with great interest but without as much surprise as might have been expected. The consensus of opinion was that in view of similar thefts that have been made from the Louvre and considering the value and charm of Da Vinci's great painting its acquisition sooner or later by a collector of unlimited means was not at all improbable.

No news of such a theft, however, had reached New York before the arrival of yesterday's cable despatch, and none of the important dealers or art collectors on this side of the water could shed any light upon the possible identity of "J. K. W. W." A canvass of art collectors who might come under the category of "New York millionaires" failed to reveal one whose initials even remotely correspond with the ones mentioned in the despatch from Paris.

Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of "Monna Lisa," also called "La Joconde" or "La Gioconda," is one of the world's famous paintings. In European art circles it is considered to rank second in value only to the Sistine Madonna by Raphael. Both are priceless. It is a matter of gossip though no official verification of the rumor has ever been given, that the British Government offered £1,000,000 for "La Joconde" and that the offer was refused.

The most striking feature of the portrait is the mysterious smile that lurks in the eyes and lips. It took Leonardo five years to bring out this peculiar expression, and at the end of that time he declared the work to be still unfinished.

The task of painting "La Joconde" was difficult and painstaking in the extreme. Da Vinci found that his model, who was the third wife of a Florentine, Francesco del Giocondo (whence the name), assumed the peculiar expression which he wanted to depict only when at ease in a certain posture and when listening to a certain strain of music. At other times this expression was lacking. The painter was thus able to work only for brief periods and at infrequent intervals in order that the effect of the music upon his model should not wear off.

Dr. Arthur Mahler in his "Paintings of the Louvre," calls "Monna Lisa" the most perfect work of art ever produced." He goes on:

"The fascination and charm of the portrait still remain despite the fact that the light tints of the skin and the brightness have disappeared and the underlying gray coating is visible. 'Let him,' says Vasari, who wishes to know to what degree art can imitate nature, contemplate this picture. It is rather a divine work than the work of man.' That which strikes us is the mobility in the apparently immobile figure. Monna Lisa is seated in a low chair on the left arm of which she leans slightly rests an arm; her long, narrow hand seem on the point of languorously closing; the corners of the mouth are a little raised and there is a mysterious and indescribable smile on the lips. The details are incomparably moulded and one may almost feel their warmth and velvety softness.

"Leonardo was the first artist who was able in painting to render the texture and suppleness of the skin. A stone balustrade separates the figure from the landscape and serves to incline it toward the spectator at the same time leaving it connected with the background. Many students are the distances which we see behind these blue mountains, and it is a landscape of fantastic dreamland far beyond reach, for the little bridge is to indicate distance and seems to lead to other worlds."

It has been said and written concerning the "Monna Lisa," but no one has unravelled all the enigmas of this sphinx-like face. Walter Pater in "The Renaissance" says of this mystic creation: "The beauty that thus rose so strangely beside the waters is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men have desired. Hers is the head upon whom the ends of the world are come' eyelids are a little weary. It is as if she had brought out from within the grave, little cell by cell, of thoughts and fantastic reveries and subtle passions. All the thoughts and experiences of the world have etched and modelled there in that which they have to refine and make expressive that form. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times and has learned the secrets of the grave, and has been in deep seas and keeps their secret about her, and trafficked for them with Eastern merchants; and, as the exchange for her, the soul of her has become subtle and changeful, and has been the mother of her passions. Beside her, and trafficked for her, with Eastern merchants; and, as the exchange for her, the soul of her has become subtle and changeful, and has been the mother of her passions. Beside her, the fancies of other women with her lovers, seem but as the fancies of a child. The world has been the mother of her beauty, as the earth of the Eve, and has given to her, with the fatal dowry of all its children, a share in its changes. The flesh has been the mother of her beauty