

Queen Topaze

[Opéra comique, in three acts; text by Lockroy and Battu. First produced at the Théâtre Lyrique, Paris, December 27, 1856.]

PERSONAGES.

La Reine Topaze. Le Capitaine Rafael. Annibal. Francappa. Fritellino. Filomèle.

[Gypsies, soldiers, etc.]

The scene is laid in France; time, last century.

"Queen Topaze" ("La Reine Topaze") is one of the few of Massé's earlier works which have held the boards, mainly on account of its charming melodiousness. The rôle of the Queen was a great favorite with Miolan-Carvalho and Parepa-Rosa, as it offers opportunities for brilliant vocal execution. Its story is of the slightest kind. In her infancy Topaze is stolen by a band of gypsies and eventually becomes their queen. She falls in love with Rafael, a captain whom she wins from his affianced, a rich noblewoman. He does not marry her, however, until she discloses to him the secret of her birth. Some byplay among the gypsies supplies the humor of the situations. As to the text it is far from dramatic in character, and the dialogue is tedious and dragging.

The music, however, is excellent, and it was to this feature that Massé owed his election in the year of its production as Auber's successor in the French Academy. The gypsy music is particularly charming. There are also a clever sextette, "We are six noblemen"--indeed, there is an unusual amount of six and seven part writing in the opera; the "Song of the Bee," a delightful melody for Queen Topaze with a particularly characteristic accompaniment, likewise a brilliant bolero; a lovely romance in the last act for Rafael, and a somewhat dramatic

narrative song for him in the first act; and a skilfully constructed trio for Annibal and the two gypsies. The remaining number of importance is an interpolated one,--"The Carnival of Venice," with the Paganini variations, which was first introduced by Miolan-Carvalho, the creator of the title rôle.