

“The talent of M. Daguerre, a Young Painter . . .” 15 November 1817

(keywords: Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre, history of the daguerreotype, history of photography)

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THEATRE DE L'AMBIGU COMIQUE.

First representation of Les Machabees, or La Prise de Jérusalem,

About two thousand years ago, a King of Syria took a fancy to convert the whole Hebrew people to the Pagan faith. Finding that he could not convince them by reasoning, he resolved to persuade them by force of arms; he supported his arguments by a powerful army, and arrived, one fine day, in front of the walls of Jerusalem, which he burnt to the ground without hesitation. Having put eighty thousand inhabitants to the sword for the better illustration of Olympian Jupiter, he murdered, by the most horrible tortures, seven brothers, who refused to submit to his laws, together with their mother, whose heroism is one of the finest traits in sacred history.

This subject has been successfully adapted to the stage, by *M. M. Cuvelier et Leopold*. Their piece is of the marvellous kind. The misfortunes of the Jewish *Niobé* have furnished them with several interesting situations, and the sack of Jerusalem has fortunately enabled them to employ the talent of *M. Daguerre*, a young painter, who has produced a scene to which we might in vain search for an equal, even at the Opera. The effect of the apotheosis in the fourth act, was perfectly magical.

Several well-arranged combats, and tasteful ballets, formed brilliant accessories to the success of the piece; and we must not omit to mention the music, the composition and arrangement of which does honor to *Amedee, Villeneuve, and Fresnoy*.

[End of text.]

EDITOR'S NOTES:

At the time of the referenced production, Daguerre would have been 29 years of age.

Additional information about Daguerre's career as a theatrical scene-painter is found in Helmut and Alison Gernsheim, *L. J. M. Daguerre (1878–1851)* (Cleveland: World Publishing Company, 1856); Paul Carpentier, *Notice sur Daguerre: Peintre, Inventeur du Diorama* (Paris: Imprimé chez Bonaventure et Ducessois, 1855). A facsimile of the latter title is included in Robert A. Sobieszek, *The Prehistory of Photography: Five Texts* (New York: Arno Press, 1979).

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