

The Black Hussar

[Opéra comique, in three acts. First produced at Vienna, 1886.]

PERSONAGES.

Helbert, officer of the Black Hussars. Waldermann, his companion.
Hackenback, magistrate of Trautenfeld. Piffkow, his man of all work.
Thorillière, major in Napoleon's army. Hetman, captain of the
Cossacks. Mifflin, an actor. Minna, } Rosetta, } Hackenback's
daughters. Barrara. Ricci. Goddess of Liberty. Germania.

[Soldiers, peasants, villagers, conspirators, etc.]

The scene is laid in the German village of Trautenfeld; time, the years
1812-13.

The story of "The Black Hussar" is simple. Von Helbert, an officer of the Black Hussars, in the disguise of an army chaplain, is seeking to foment an insurrection in the town of Trautenfeld. Hackenback, the town magistrate, has carried himself so diplomatically, as between the Russians and French, and is so opposed to any rupture with either from fear of sudden visitation, that Von Helbert's efforts to induce his townsmen to rise against the Napoleonic régime are not altogether successful. The French in the mean time are hunting for him, but he cunningly succeeds in getting a description of the magistrate posted for that of himself. To be ready for any sudden emergency, Hackenback has a reversible panel on his house, one side having the portrait of the Czar and the other that of Napoleon. When he is suspected by the French, he calls their attention to it; but unfortunately for him the Russian side is exposed, and this with the description which Von Helbert had so kindly posted leads to his arrest. Finally the Black Hussar regiment arrives, and captures the French troops just as they have captured the Russian, which had previously been in occupation, so that there is no need for further disguises. The

humorous situations in the opera grow out of the love-making between Von Helbert and his companion Waldermann and the magistrate's daughters Minna and Rosetta.

Although "The Black Hussar" is musically inferior to "The Beggar Student," yet it has many interesting numbers, among them the long descriptive song of Piffkow, the man of all work, "Piffkow, Piffkow, that's the cry," which reminds one in its general character of Figaro's famous song in "The Barber of Seville"; the magistrate's buffo song, "All Night long I've weighed and sifted"; Helbert's martial recitative, "I've traversed Lands that once were green"; the jolly gossipers' chorus, introducing the second act; Piffkow's bombastic song, "'Twas in the Adjacent Town Last Night"; Minna's quaint Russian song, "Ivan loved his Katza well"; the introduced song, "Ohe, mamma"; and the trio following it, "The Ways of Love are very strange," which closes the act.