

## **The Merry War**

[Opéra comique, in three acts; text by Zell and Genée. First produced in Vienna, November 25, 1881.]

### PERSONAGES.

Countess Violetta. Col. Umberto. Duke de Limburg. Balthasar Groats, dealer in tulip bulbs. Else, wife of Groats. Spiuzzi. Franchetti. Biffi.

[Soldiers, citizens, etc.]

The scene is laid in Genoa; time, the eighteenth century.

The "merry war" is not a very serious one, as may be inferred from its title. It is a quarrel between two petty states, Genoa and Massa Carrara, growing out of the fact that a popular dancer has made simultaneous engagements at the theatres of each. Both claim her, and the question at issue is at which theatre the dancer shall appear. One harmless hand grenade is thrown from either side with monotonous regularity each day, and the "merry war" is without interesting incident until the pretty Countess Violetta appears in one of the camps. She is seeking to make her way in disguise into the city of the other camp, to take command of the citadel. Umberto, the colonel commanding, is deceived by her, and allows her to pass through the lines. When informed of the deception he determines to take his revenge by marrying her. Understanding that she is to marry the Duke de Limburg by proxy, he impersonates the Duke and is married to Violetta without arousing her suspicions. He is assisted in his scheme by Balthasar Groats, a Dutch speculator in tulip bulbs, whom the soldiers have arrested, thinking him a spy, and who is naturally willing to do anything for the Colonel to get him out of his predicament. Complications arise, however, when Groats' wife appears and becomes jealous, also because of Violetta's antipathy towards her supposed husband and her affection for Umberto. All

these matters are arranged satisfactorily, however, when there is an opportunity for explanation, and a treaty of peace is signed between the two states, when it is found that the cause of the "merry war" will not keep her engagement with either theatre.

The music of "The Merry War" is light and gay throughout. Like all the rest of the Strauss operas, it might be said that it is a collection of marches and waltzes, and a repetition of dance music which has done good service in ballrooms, strung upon the slight thread of a story. Its most taking numbers are Umberto's couplets, "Till now no Drop of Blood"; Balthasar's comical song, "General, ho!" and his tulip song, "From Holland to Florence in Peace we were going"; Violetta's arietta, "In vain I cannot fly"; the dainty duet for Violetta and Umberto, "Please do"; Else's romantic song, "I wandered on"; the ensemble and Dutch song by Artemisia, "The much Admired One"; Umberto's love song, "The Night begins to creep"; Violetta's song, "I am yet Commander for To-day," leading to a terzetto and spirited final chorus, "Of their Warlike Renown."