

Secret Poetry.

THE WIVES OF WEINSBERG. DAVID VEDDER.

The little town of Weinsberg
Is built upon a hill,
And the ladies there are famed for
Sagacity and skill ;
If e'er I go a-wooing,
Whatever may be-tide,
The little town of Weinsberg
Shall furnish me a bride.

The mighty Kaiser Conrad,
By fancied wrongs enraged,
Together drew his forces,
And war against it waged,
By sap and escalading
He struggled to prevail—
But its bulwarks were of granite,
Its burghers cased in mail !

Three times the veteran warriors
Redoubled the attack,
And thrice the stalwart burghers
The imperial host beat back ;
But fell disease and famine
The patriots did assail—
The civic guards of Weinsberg
Could scarce support their mail.

Repulsed, and chafed to frenzy,
Dishonour'd one and all,
The despot sent a herald
Beneath the leaguer'd wall—
" Ye base, rebellious varlets,
Lay down your arms to me—
Or every boor shall dangle
Upon the nearest tree !"

A panic spread like wild-fire
Through street, and square, and lane,
And frantic words were utter'd,
Both pious and profane,
" By famine or the halter,
Alas ! we must expire ;
I feel the noose already,"
Exclaimed a famish'd friar,
With wild verification
A shrivell'd landlord cried—
" My larders all are empty,
And cannot be supplied."
" We're lost," cried Hans the baker—
" Undone !" rejoin'd priest ;
And grim old Karl, the blacksmith,
He smote his wither'd breast.

The Iris spans the valley
When clouds obscure the sky,
And winter nights are darkest
When dawn is drawing nigh ;
And lordly man's confounded,
Distracted, and distress'd,
A balm is oft discover'd
In woman's gentle breast.

Close to the hour of midnight,
An embassy of wives
Hied to the foe's encampment,
At hazard of their lives—
Led on by Madam Lobson,
Whose bright dishervell'd hair
Stream'd o'er her milk-white shoulders,
A picture of despair !

She sought the chief's pavilion,
And humbly on her knees
The lovely suppliant bended,
And pray'd for clemency,
Ah ! vehemently she pleaded,
And copiously she wept ;
But still the ruthless monarch
His fatal purpose kept.

" Go, tell that horde of traitors—
Audacious base-born thralls,
I'll hang them high as Haman,
When once I scale their walls ;
I wage no war on women,
Be high or low their birth—
You're free, so bring such treasure
As you can carry forth."

The morning dawn'd serenely,
The birds were all in song,
When from the portals issued
A helpless female throng ;
Each to the distant mountains
Pursued her devious track,
With terror in her bosom,
Her husband on her back !

Repudiated courtiers,
They sickn'd at the sight,
But Conrad from his tent door,
Beheld it with delight !
" Ha, bravo !" cried the Kaiser,
And rubb'd his hands with glee ;
" I question if the Empress
Would do as much for me,"

From turret, spire, and steeple,
The civic banners stream'd ;
A pardon has been granted,
An amnesty proclaim'd,
A sumptuous entertainment
The almoner provides ;
And Conrad at the table
In regal state presides.

Ah ! how the viands vanish'd,
Like snow-flakes in the Rhine ;
The burghers were enraptured
With loyalty and wine :
They snapped their skinny fingers,
They toasted and they drank,
Without regard to talent,
Or precedence, or rank !

" What ho ! ye moping minstrels,
Strike up a lively air ;"
And Conrad, in a twinkling,
Sprang from his regal chair ;
He danced with all the women
That filled these spacious rooms—
Alike with rank and beauty,
And her who gathers brooms !

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—From the German of Burger.