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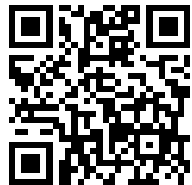
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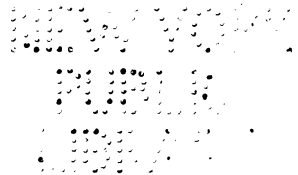
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THE WIVES OF WEINSBERG.

[GOTTFRIED AUGUST BÜRGER, born January 1st, 1748, at Molmerwende, near Halberstadt, died June 8, 1794, was one of the most popular writers of Ballads in Germany. The English translation of his "*Lenore*" was the first literary venture of Walter Scott; Bürger, who was married three times, led a life of great misery and constant pecuniary embarrassment. His ballad "*Der Kaiser und der Abt*" is an imitation of the old English "*King John and the Abbot of Canterbury*" in Percy's "*Reliques*." Bürger was also the author of the first German version of the Munchausen stories.]

Which way to Weinsberg? neighbor, say!
 'Tis sure a famous city:
 It must have cradled, in its day,
 Full many a maid of noble clay,
 And matrons, wise and witty;
 And if ever marriage should happen to me,
 A Weinsberg dame my wife shall be.

King Conrad once, historians say,
 Fell out with this good city;
 So down he came, one luckless day,—
 Horse, foot, dragoons,—in stern array,—
 And cannon,—more's the pity!
 Around the walls the artillery roared,
 And bursting bombs their fury poured.

But naught the little town could scare;
 Then red with indignation,
 He bade the herald straight repair
 Up to the gates, and thunder there
 The following proclamation:
 "Rascals! When I your town do take,
 No living thing shall save its neck!"

Now, when the herald's trumpet sent
 These tidings through the city,
 To every house a death-knell went;
 Such murder-cries the hot air rent
 Might move the stones to pity.
 Then bread grew dear, and good advice
 Could not be had for any price.

Then "Woe is me!" "O misery!"
 What shrieks of lamentation!
 And "Kyrie Eleison!" cried
 The pastors, and the flock replied,
 "Lord, save us from starvation!"
 "O, woe is me, poor Corydon!
 My neck,—my neck! I'm gone! I'm gone."

Yet oft, when counsel, deed and prayer
 Had all proved unavailing,
 When hope hung trembling on a hair,
 How oft has woman's wit been there!—
 A refuge never failing;
 For woman's wit and Papal fraud,
 Of olden time, were famed abroad.

A youthful dame,—praised be her name!
 Last night had seen her plighted,—
 Whether in waking hour or dream,
 Conceived a rare and novel scheme,
 Which all the town delighted;
 Which you, if you think otherwise,
 Have leave to laugh at and despise.

At midnight hour, when culverin
 And gun and bomb were sleeping,
 Before the camp, with mournful mien,
 The loveliest embassy were seen
 All kneeling low and weeping.
 So sweetly, plaintively they prayed,
 But no reply save this was made:

"The women have free leave to go,
 Each with her choicest treasure;
 But let the knaves, their husbands, know
 That unto them the king will show
 The weight of his displeasure."
 With these sad terms the lovely train
 Stole weeping from the camp again.

But, when the morning gilt the sky,
 What happened? Give attention.
 The city gates wide open fly,
 And all the wives came trudging by,
 Each bearing—need I mention?—
 Her own dear husband on her back,
 All snugly seated in a sack!

Full many a sprig of court, the joke
 Not relishing, protested,
 And urged the king; but Conrad spoke:
 "A monarch's word must not be broke!"
 And here the matter rested.
 "Bravo!" he cried. "Ha, ha! Bravo!
 Our lady guessed it would be so."

He pardoned all, and gave a ball,
 That night at royal quarters.
 The fiddles squeaked, the trumpets blew,
 And up and down the dancers flew,
 Court sprigs with city daughters.
 The mayor's wife—O rarest sight!—
 Danced with the shoemaker that night!

Ah, where is Weinsberg, Sir, I pray?
 'Tis sure a famous city:
 It must have cradled in its day,
 Full many a maid of noble clay,
 And matrons, wise and witty;
 And if ever marriage should happen to me,
 A Weinsberg dame my wife shall be.

Tr. by C. T. Brooks.