

# ILLNESS OF THE EMPEROR

George Stepney (1663–1707), British Envoy to Vienna (1702–1706)

to Robert Harley (1661–1724), British Secretary of State for the Northern Department (1704–1708)

Vienna, 25 April 1705

By my last of the 25<sup>th</sup>, you will have seen the Emperor<sup>1</sup> was in a manner given over by his physicians, But he is restored beyond all expectation.

The Sacrament was exposed 3 days together in all the churches, and constant devotions performed night and day for his recovery by the religious orders and the people of all conditions whatsoever. It is not to be expressed what general concern and affection they showed towards their prince during his extremity, and how earnestly they desire the continuance of his reign, which certainly has been most mild and indulgent. The Empress<sup>2</sup> was to constant in her attendance on him, that thereby her own health is not a little impaired. And the King of the Romans<sup>3</sup> showed a very tender duty in every part of his behaviour.

The same Evening the Emperor made his will in the presence of Count Harrach,<sup>4</sup> the Grand-Master, Count Mansfeld,<sup>5</sup> his Grand Chamberlain, and Count Trautsohn, Grand Chamberlain to the King of the Romans, who during the absence of the Prince of Salm<sup>6</sup> performs the part of first minister to the King. It was expected Count Buccellini, the Chancellor of Austria, should have drawn up this act, but the Emperor was pleased to use Baron Seilern. It is presumed some provision has thereby been made for the Empress, who hitherto has had no dowry settled out of the revenue of Bohemia (as has been the usual practice with other Empresses) because she has never yet been crowned in that kingdom. It is likewise believed His Imperial Majesty has had some particular care of the King of Spain,<sup>7</sup> the uncertain state of whose affairs disturbed his mind more than any other accident during their indisposition, for he frequently fell into pathetic discourses about his dear Charles, and gave some private directions to the Duke of Moles, who has the chief management here of what relates to that prince.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> two new physicians were called to his assistance, who gave him some grains of what they call aurum-fulminani,<sup>8</sup> which had a wonderful good effect by easing his stomach of an oppressive phlegm, whereby he was almost suffocated.

From that time he has been in an hopeful way of recovery, three nights together he rested pretty well, the swelling in his breast and legs is abated, and if his appetite returns, there is no doubt but he may do well.

However, lest his weakness and indisposition should interrupt the course of business, the chancellors of all courts and offices are ordered to apply to the King, who is to hold councils and give dispatch to affairs of all kinds.

Circular letters have been issued to the states of Lower Austria that they deliver within a fortnight 60.000 bushels of corn at four places on the Danube—Crems, Tulln, Stockerau, and Vienna—which store is thought sufficient for providing the Imperial Army in Hungary for 3 months, and the same is to be deducted after the rate of a florin per bushel from the 400.000 florins at which this province is taxed for this year's contribution.

Magyar Tudomány Akadémia, *Archivum Rákócziánum: Rákóczi Ferencz Levéltára* (Pest: Eggenberger, 1873):70–71.

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<sup>1</sup> Leopold I (1640–1705), Holy Roman Emperor (1658–1705)

<sup>2</sup> Eleonora Magdalene of the Palatinate (1655–1720), third wife of Leopold I

<sup>3</sup> Joseph (1678–1711), King of the Romans (1690–1711), son of Leopold I and heir to the Imperial Throne of the Holy Roman Empire

<sup>4</sup> Alois Thomas Raimun (1669–1742), Graf von Harrach

<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Franz (1640–1715), Prince of Fondi and Graf von Mansfeld

<sup>6</sup> Charles Theodore (1645–1710), Prince of Salm

<sup>7</sup> Charles (1685–1740) was the Hapsburg claimant to the Throne of Spain throughout the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–1714)

<sup>8</sup> AuHN·NH<sub>2</sub> — Fulminate of Gold, created as an important step in the creation of the Philosopher's Stone