

# FUNERAL 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, 13 May 1705

On the 9<sup>th</sup>, in the evening, the Emperor<sup>1</sup> was buried with very little ceremony. The religious orders begun the procession with tapers in their hands, as had all who assisted at this solemnity. They were followed by the magistrates, some prelates, and several offices and commissions belonging to the city and court. Then came the chamberlains, and at last the privy councilors, all in long cloaks; the youngest went foremost, and those of the council, who were likewise Knights of the Golden Fleece, came last in order. Next before the corpse went Cardinal Collonitz,<sup>2</sup> with the Venetian ambassador. The Nuncio did not assist, for reasons which shall be explained to you in another part of this letter. On the coffin were no other ornaments than the ordinary pall of tissue with the three crowns and 2 cushions, which were with the body when it was exposed. The bier was carried by 24 chamberlains; on both sides were the great officers of the court. The Emperor<sup>3</sup> followed with a mourning veil over his face. After him came the Empress-Consort<sup>4</sup> and the three Archduchesses, attended by the maids of honour of both courts, and by the privy councilors' and chamberlains' ladies according to the rank of their husbands, all veiled as they went to the church, and without veils when they returned.

The Emperor has behaved himself during this accident with very great decency and prudence, and continues to show a most dutiful affection towards his mother, not only by visiting her once a day, but by writing to her every morning; I cannot tell whether this be the usual custom observed in the family on the like occasions, or whether it proceed entirely from his own good nature.

The changes that have been made hitherto are not very considerable. The Emperor has writ with his own hand to the Margrave of Baden<sup>5</sup> and Prince Eugene,<sup>6</sup> confirming them in their supreme commands. He has likewise confirmed Count Stahremberg to signify to those who are under him in the Treasury that that should go on in the execution of their office *per interim* until his pleasure be further known. Count Herberstein is likewise continued in his employment of Vice-President of War, and on the 10<sup>th</sup> instant he signified to Field-Marshal Heister in writing that the Emperor having been entirely satisfied with his vigilance and fidelity, was willing to make use of his service in the Empire. The General seemed a little surprised at this quick way of proceeding, having flattered himself with being sent back to Hungary; as I believe he would have been if the Emperor had lived. He answered very moderately that he was ready to act wherever he should be appointed, but before he removed to any other post, he hoped leave might be given him to clear himself against any imputation that may have been laid to his charge during his last expedition.

At the same time directions were given to Field-Marshal Erbeville to prepare for taking upon him the command in Hungary. You remember it is the same person who acted last summer in the Upper Palatinate and did very good service, considering the small force he had. He is to have under him Count Schlick and Count John Palfy as generals of horse and Baron Geswindt as general of the artillery on foot.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, the Bishop of Nitria died here. He was Chancellor of Hungary, which office has gone along with the Bishopric for near these 100 years. But it is thought upon the present vacancy His Imperial Majesty may resolve to break that custom by conferring it on some secular person, which may be agreeable to the Hungarians, who seemed not satisfied that a place of such importance should remain so long in the hands of the

---

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

<sup>2</sup> Leopold Karl von Kollonitsch (1631–1707), Cardinal (1686–1707) and Archbishop of Esztergon, Hungary (1695–1707)

<sup>3</sup> Joseph I (1678–1711), Holy Roman Emperor (1705–1711)

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelmina Amalia of Brunswick (1673–1742), wife of Joseph I

<sup>5</sup> Louis William (1655–1707), Margrave of Baden

<sup>6</sup> Eugene (1663–1736), Prince of Savoy, the pre-eminent Hapsburg military commander and cousin of Louis William of Baden

clergy. This prelate was assisted at his death by two Jesuits who, according to their ordinary method, had persuaded him to leave 50.000 florins to the Society, and 10.000 only to the Emperor. But the President of the Chamber having notice of this disposition has put a stop to the payment, thinking the proportion not very reasonable. The rather, since by the laws of Hungary, the clergy are obliged to leave one third of their substance to the crown, and are left at liberty to dispose of the rest in favour of their relations and to pious uses.

We have nothing new from Hungary, except the circular letter you find here from Prince Rákóczi<sup>7</sup> (dated at Erla, the 24<sup>th</sup> past) inviting the several counties to come thither and deliberate on the manner of accepting the mediation. But I fear the design is to send back Baron Szirmai and the two deputies with an insignificant answer, under pretext that nothing can be done till this court admit of a guaranty. These patents were originally penned in the Hungarian language, and by a servant of Count Palfy's have been translated into Latin; almost as difficult to be understood. The paper mentioned therein (giving an account of our negotiation at Schemnitz) appeared some time ago in print both in Hungary and Poland, and though I presume you have received a copy of it from other hands, yet I cannot forbear sending you one because I find it very impartial, and entirely agreeing with the account which Mr Bruyninx<sup>8</sup> and I gave of that meeting.

Two days ago, Prince Esterhasi, the Palatine of Hungary (whose business it is to mediate between the King and the people) had orders from His Imperial Majesty to give notice of his father's death by circular letters, and at the same time to signify the desire he has of beginning the government by acts of clemency and fatherly affection. The Prince of Salm<sup>9</sup> has promised to communicate to me the dispatches which are now preparing on that occasion, therefore I forbear troubling you with the minute thereof, hoping by next post to transmit the whole in due form.

Magyar Tudományos Akademia, *Archivum Rákócziánium: Rákóczi Ferencz Levéltára* (Pest: Eggenberger, 1873):81–84

---

<sup>7</sup> Francis II Rákóczi (1676–1735), leader of the Hungarian rebels

<sup>8</sup> Hamel Bruyninx, Dutch envoy to Vienna (1700–1738)

<sup>9</sup> Charles Theodore (1645–1710), Prince of Salm