

# RAISING THE SIEGE OF VIENNA

## John Sobieski, King of Poland

13 September 1683

Praised be our Lord God forever for granting our nation such a victory and such glory as was never heard of in all times past! The whole camp of the enemy, with their artillery and untold treasure, has fallen into our hands. They are now retreating in great confusion, and the approaches to the town, the camp, and the open fields are covered with their corpses.

The camels and other beasts of burden, the cattle, and the sheep belonging to the enemy were captured to-day by our troops and the captive Turkish shepherds driven off....

What the Turks lost in powder and ammunition alone is worth a million. Some of our camp followers foolishly set off the powder in several places, and it made a fearful noise, but there was no further harm done. The grand vizier lost all his rich treasure and barely escaped, on horseback, with nothing but the coat on his back, and I have become his heir and successor.

It all came about in this way. Having forced my way into the enemy's camp, I was pressing forward in pursuit of the vizier when one of his chamberlains surrendered to me and afterwards showed me his leader's tent, which was so large it might have contained within its circumference the city of Warsaw or of Lemberg. The standard that the grand vizier always had carried before him with great ceremony fell into my hands, along with the Mohammedan banner presented to him by the Sultan for this campaign, which I have sent by post to his Apostolic Holiness in Rome. There are quantities of the most beautiful gold-mounted sabers and other rare Turkish accouterments to be seen in our army.

The coming on of night prevented us from continuing the pursuit. It cannot be denied that they defended themselves bravely, especially the companies of janizaries who guarded the approaches to the camp and so bore the brunt of the battle. The daring and courage of these people were such that while part of them fought with us in the field the rest undertook to storm the fortifications, which with their great numbers they were well prepared to do.

I estimate the number of the besieging army at three hundred thousand, not counting the Tartars; others believe there were three hundred thousand tents and reckon three men to a tent; but that would make the number too great to be believed. However, there must have been at least one hundred thousand tents, and from these the conquerors take away what they like. The townspeople, too, are rushing out to get their share. I believe that it will take them a week to gather in all the booty.

A number of Austrian people—women folk especially—whom the Turkish army had taken captive, but could not carry away with them in their hasty flight, they cut down with their sabers; but many of them can be healed of their wounds.

This morning I went into the town and found that it could not have held out five days longer. Never have the eyes of men beheld so great damage done in so brief a time; great masses of stone and rock have been broken up and tossed about in heaps by the enemy's mines, and the imperial castle is riddled with holes and ruined by their cannon balls....

The governor of Vienna, accompanied by a great crowd of people of both high and low degree, came out to greet me, all kissing and petting me and calling me their savior. Later I visited two churches, where again I found crowds of people who tried to kiss my hands, and even my feet and clothing; most of them had to content themselves with touching my coat. All around one heard them crying, "Let us through to kiss the valorous hand!"

There is a huge pile of captured flags and tents; in short, the enemy has departed with nothing whatever but his life. Let Christendom rejoice and thank the Lord our God that he has not permitted the heathen to hold us up to scorn and derision and to ask, "Where, now, is your God?"