



# MAGNALIA NATURAE

HOW WENCESLAUS SEILERUS  
THE LATE FAMOUS PROJECTION-  
MAKER, AT THE EMPEROR'S  
COURT, AT VIENNA, CAME BY,  
AND MADE AWAY WITH A VERY  
GREAT QUANTITY OF POWDER  
OF PROJECTION, BY PROJECT-  
ING WITH IT BEFORE THE  
EMPEROR, AND A GREAT MANY  
WITNESSES, SELLING IT, &c.  
FOR SOME YEARS PAST.

By JOHN JOACHIM BECHER

R.A.M.S.  
DIGITAL  
2011

# *Magnalia Naturae*

OR, THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

lately exposed to public *Sight* and *Sale*.

Being a *true and exact Account of the Manner*

How Wenceslaus Seilerus

*The late Famous Projection-maker, at the Emperor's Court, at Vienna, came by, and made away with a very great Quantity of Powder of Projection, by projecting with it before the Emperor, and a great many Witnesses, selling it, &c. for some years past.*

*Published at the Request, and for the Satisfaction of several Curious, especially of Mr. Robert Boyle, &c.*

By *John Joachim Becher (1635 - 1682),*

One of the Council of the Emperor,

and a Commissioner for the *Examen* of this Affair.

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Rom. 1. 20.

LONDON,

Printed by *Thomas Dawks*, His Majesties *British* Printer,  
living in *Black-fryers*. Sold also by *La. Curtiss*,  
in *Goat Court on Ludgate Hill*. 1680.

## **With Appendix 1:**

An extract from Thompson, C. J. S., "*Poison mysteries in history, romance and crime*". (Published by J.B. Lippincott, 1923).

**Chapter XVII. A Mystery of the Austrian Court in the Seventeenth Century**

**The TRANSLATOR**  
**To the READER.**

*There is no ingenious man that is not unacquainted with the curiosities to be met with in the world, who hath not either seen some transmutation of metals, or at least heard so many witness that they have seen it; as to be persuaded that there is such thing as the Philosophers-Stone, or Powder of Projection. Only there he some great men (as his Highness Prince Rupert, who hath seen the Projection at Frankfort, in Germany) who seem to question whether such powder or tincture is prepared with profit. But this doubt is hereby now fully cleared and resolved, from the great quantity of this tincture left buried by the Abbot Founder of the Church it was found in: (as this relation informs you) for it is not credible that the Abbot was Master, before he had done the Work, of such an immense treasure, as he must needs have had to draw so much tincture from: which could not be extracted (if the preparation thereof is without profit,) from a lesser quantity of Gold than it gives or yield again in the projection: so that the same quantity of Gold as it yields again must have been spoiled to make it; which it is not credible an Abbot of Germany was Master of, as is said. And, for the truth of this relation, besides that, it is attested by many men of great quality, good parts, probity, and modesty, by the Emperor himself; by Count Wallestein who was resident here a year ago; and by Dr. Becher at present in this city. It is so publicly known through all parts of Germany, chiefly about Vienna where this was transacted, that to doubt, or deny it, were as absurd, as if one denied that the West-Indies have been found out of late years, or that there be ships at sea, because he hath seen neither. But among the many remarkable passages in this relation, one thing is most worthy of observation, viz. the honesty of Fryer Francis Preyhausen, who deserves to be chronicled for his faithfulness & truth to Fryer Wenceslaus the finder of this powder: for he wanted neither frequent opportunities nor specious pretences to effect what some Princes could not forbear to attempt (to rob Wenceslaus of his Powder) though without a certainty of success, and though he was himself sure of success, for he was thrice, for a good while each time, entrusted with the box, and might find excuses enough for it; yet he not only did not succumb to the temptation of getting all, as they did; but did not so much as deny, purloin, or withhold the least part of the powder from Fryer Wenceslaus, even when (seeing how he squandered it away) he had a good pretence to keep back some for his use: and might justly have claimed and reserved some for his own use also, not only for his services, but for the great dangers he had exposed himself to for his sake; thus keeping true to the end, even against his own right and so great a temptation. A faithful man who can find? (Pro. 20:6) But here such one is found, and that among the Fryers! Whence I am glad to observe, that all the Fryers are not quite so black as some make them; and to see that among them, as well as among other sects some good men are to be found who make conscience of an oath, and keep it though to their loss. Thanks are to Fryer Francis's honesty for so much as we know of this whole concern. I am sure that if he had what his honesty deserves, what the Emperor hath done for Wenceslaus had been bestowed upon him; and that Wenceslaus himself, whilst in the dungeon, would have said with all his heart, that if he would do for him what he hath done, he would deserve what he hath not had, I mean the whole powder: but honesty meets seldom with what it deserves.*

***Magnalia Naturae:***  
**or, The Truth of The Philosophers-Stone Asserted:**  
***Being exposed to Public Sight and Sale in our days.***

*The place where Wenceslaus Seilerus* (who is the main subject of this following discourse) was born, I am not certain whether it was at *Vienna*, yea or no; But sure I am he was of the *Austrian* country: and his brother did wait upon the Count of *Weissenwolf*, the younger. After, *Seilerus* himself, when he was about the 20th year of his age, he was cast into a Monastery of the *Augustine* Fryers at *Brno* in *Moravia*: where, after his year of probation, he took the habit upon him, and was admitted into the number of Fryers, though it were against his will (as he afterwards confessed) and as the event did make appear: For having once made Profession of the Order, he did continually strive and study how he might free himself from the Monastery, and seeing that could not be done without money, and money, in his circumstances, could not lawfully be obtained: He began to study an indirect way for the obtaining thereof, for his fellow Fryers having often muttered to him of some great treasure hid in their Monastery, he had a great desire to find it out.

And in order thereunto, he did not scruple to learn the Magic art, if any one had been ready to inform him therein: wherein Fortune seemed to favour his desires, for there was an old woman, a cow-keepers wife, living before the gate of the town, and fortress, who was skilful therein, and he came to be acquainted with her upon this occasion.

The younger monks and students, as they were called, are allowed some set days, every week, to walk out of the gates of the city, to enjoy the open air and to refresh their minds, supposed to be wearied with study; In these relaxations one company dispersed it self here, another there, as they think fit for their divertissement. But Fryer *Wenceslaus* (for so I shall hereafter call him) made use of this occasion, always to visit the said old woman, and upon the pretence of drinking new milk, to interrogate her concerning her Art. And in a short time he got so much into her Favour as to obtain from her a small wax ball marked with certain figures or characters, which was of that virtue, that, if it was laid upon the ground, it would presently run to the place where any treasure was hid: (This ball I afterwards saw often in his custody, and handled it with my hands.)

It happened afterwards, that, as the custom is for the old Fathers when they grow weak, to have some young Fryers to assist them; so, Fryer *Wenceslaus* was assigned to attend an ancient Father, who was a Cabalist, and a lover of Magic, in which studies, at any vacancies, he spent his time. He often told Fryer *Wenceslaus*, that there was a vast treasure hid in the Church of their Monastery; to whom *Wenceslaus* replied that he had got a Ball which, he was assured, had the virtue to discover hidden treasures: And, thereupon he showed him the ball, and the characters impressed thereon, which the old Father did seriously consider, and much valued them.

A while after, as they two were walking alone in the Church, afore day, after Mattens, they tried the ball, by laying it down in several places, but found no

effect; At last, placing it near a certain pillar old and ruinous, it began to show its efficacy and virtue by its often running thereto: This they interpreted for a certain indication, that the treasure was there hid; but how to come at it was the question. They had not leave, means nor opportunity to break down this stony structure, neither did they certainly know at what height or depth thereof the treasure was laid in it, so that upon these discouragements they were forced to let it alone.

But it happened afterwards, that, a great tempest arising, the whole Church, and especially this decayed pillar, was so shaken and spoiled, that to prevent its falling down the Abbot was necessitated to order it to be demolished. And in regard the old Father, whom Fryer *Wenceslaus* attended, had skill in architecture, and by reason of his infirmities could not be otherwise serviceable to the Monastery, he was therefore appointed to oversee the masons; which Office he and his Assistant Fryer *Wenceslaus* did willingly undertake, and were very sedulous in their attendance, and discharge thereof. When the pillar was almost all pulled own, They found therein a Copper box, of a reasonable bigness, which the old Father presently snatched up and carried it into his Cloister, and immediately opened it: Where, at the top, he found a piece of parchment, on which there was some inscription and writing (I once had a Copy of it, but I lost it amongst my other letters; but this I remember); It contained the number of the years wherein the Church was built, and the name of the Abbot the founder thereof, who had been an Envoy at *Ratisbone*; I do also remember, that amongst other writings, there was this Motto, "AMICE, TIBI SOLI," which I English thus, "*Friend, to thy self alone*". Under this parchment there were other letters laid, marked with characters, which contained directions how to multiply the powder, as the inscription showed: and under them there were four boxes full of a red powder.

When the boxes were opened, Fryer *Wenceslaus* was quite out of heart, having lost his preconceived hope of some great treasure therein: for he verily believed that, if there were not old pieces of gold yet some diamonds, or other precious stones must have been lodged there. And finding no such thing, but four Boxes of darkish colored powder, he was so impatient at the disappointment, that, if he had been the sole manager of the business, he had thrown away boxes, powder and all: For at that time he was so little acquainted with Chemistry, that so much as the name was not known to him, and he had scarce heard of the word *Tincture*.

But the old Father was not so transported, but told him, "*That perhaps some medicinal virtue was contained in the powder, and that the characters in the annexed papers might possibly discover its use.*" Therefore he was resolved to study some books, to find out what those characters meant: In the mean time he would carefully keep the Box.

Not long after, the old Father sent Fryer *Wenceslaus* into the kitchen of the Monastery, to see if he could find an old pewter dish or plate, which was no longer fit for use, and if he could bring it to him; which he accordingly did, who thereupon caused a coal-fire to be made, and put a crucible into Fryer *Wenceslaus* hand, to place therein; This was the first chemical operation that ever Fryer *Wenceslaus* performed in all his Life, and for which he was so unfit, that he placed the crucible upside down, so that the old Father himself was forced to set it in its

right posture. They put the pewter plate broken and folded together into the crucible, which being presently melted, the Father took out some of the powder (so much as would lay upon the point of a knife) which was in one of the four boxes, and wrapping it in a little wax, he cast it into the crucible upon the pewter, and commanded his assistant Fryer *Wenceslaus* to blow up the fire, adding these Words, “Now *I shall see whether I have well deciphered the characters, and whether I have found out the use of this Powder.* “

As soon as ever the powder was cast in, the pewter stood still, came to a sudden Congelation. Then the fire was suffered to go out, and the crucible to wax cold, which being broken, there was found a ponderous mass of metals, very yellow and variegated with red lines: Upon which the Father made Fryer *Wenceslaus* to go out into the town, upon pretence of getting a book to be bound, and wished him to go to some gold-smith, and show him this mass of metal, alleging to him, that he had some ancient Roman coins of gold, which he had melted down, but for want of a sufficient fire and other defects, he had not done it exactly; and therefore he desired the gold-smith to melt it over again, and cast it in an ingot. The gold-smith gratified him therein, and Fryer *Wenceslaus*, at the command of the Father took off a small piece, which he preserved, and then asked the gold-smith, “*What the rest was worth?*” Who, after he had weighed and tried on the touchstone, did value it at twenty Ducats (which are worth two Crowns a piece) at which rate Fryer *Wenceslaus* sold it to him, and receiving the money, returned joyfully home. The old Father did only desire the remaining portion of the gold, which he had reserved, but suffered Fryer *Wenceslaus* to enjoy the Ducats, yet with this advice, That he should discover it to none in the Monastery.

But Fryer *Wenceslaus*, though he had not been master of so much money a long time, was not satisfied therewith, but entertained various thoughts in his mind, whether he should by flight free himself from that bondage and slavery he was in, whilst he had the advantage of so much cash? Or else, whether he should stay so long there, till either by flattery or craft, he had got the Copper boxes from the old Father. To the first of these cogitations he was edged on, by the eagerness of that desire he had to leave the Monastery: But then, the great heap of gold which he might make with the powder, as he well conjectured, if he could get it into his hands, did somewhat abate his fervor, and persuade him to stay. For, though he was yet altogether ignorant of Chemistry, yet the precedent trials had given him so much light that he was fully persuaded, the box contained and was worth a vast treasure; and, though at that time, the rareness of the powder, and the multiplication of it had very small influence upon his thoughts: yet, because he had a share in finding of it out, by means of his ball, he therefore thought that half of it at least did belong to him.

But there was another thing which more perplexed his mind, and that was the fear, that the old Father, either out of a principle of devotion, or of vain-glory, should discover the whole story of the business to the Abbot, and by that means should make away all the powder: and he was rather inclined to these Cogitations, because he had observed, that the Father, who before had been more remiss in hiding the box, now of late was so solicitous to preserve it, that he kept it continually in his desk, and scarce ever stirred from it, except when he was to go to Church with Fryer *Wenceslaus*.

Being moved with these considerations, he was induced to demand boldly some quantity of this powder of the old man? The answer he received, was, that he was “*yet too young to know how to dispose of, and to keep well this powder: besides, you wanted no money whilst you are in the Monastery; and, if you should procure a sum by means of this powder, in your present condition, it would be very prejudicial both to his Soul and body, and you might become thereby of all men most miserable. Moreover* (proceeds the Father) *this Powder may have many other Virtues and Operations which are yet unknown both to you and me, and therefore I will farther study the Writings annexed to it, and hereafter I will be mindful of you, but at present I will not part with any of the Powder, only you shall have every week two Crowns allowed for your Divertissements.*” But this fair story sounded not well in the Fryer’s ears, who had a private design (unknown to the old Father) to leave the Monastery.

In the interim it happened, that as they two were returning from Mattens, early in the Morning, the old Father complained of a Cold he had got, and a great Rheum in his head, and desired Fryer *Wenceslaus* to go to the cellar and fetch him a cup of wine, he did so, and upon his return he found the Father taken with a fit of an Apoplexy, and speechless: whereupon, the first thing he did was to find out the key of his desk, and taking from thence the copper box, he carried it to his own cell, and hid it there. This being done, he rang the bell in the Fathers cell to call up the Monks, who came flying with all diligence to bring him some remedies, but they were all too late the Father being quite dead: Hereupon his desk was presently sealed up, and solemn ceremonies according to the occasion were performed over his dead Body. But who more than Fryer *Wenceslaus* who more inwardly joyful, from whom death had removed his rival, had made him to be master of all the whole treasure.

Hereupon he began to deliberate with himself how he might make his escape out of the Monastery with most safety and least suspicion. But herein many difficulties did accrue: He was grown a little debauched and prodigal by the opportunity of the 20 Ducats abovementioned, which he had to spend; and by that means he had incurred the emulation of his Fellow Fryers, who did urge the Pryor and Superior, that, the old Father being now dead, and so Fryer *Wenceslaus* discharged from his attendance on him, he should for the future be bound to a stricter discipline, both in reference to his studies, as also to his frequenting the Church. Moreover his Ducats were all spent, and no opportunity offered to make another trial, or if he had, he could not have sold the product of it.

In this anxiety he resolved to open his mind to another Monk, a comrade of his, one *Fryer Francis Preyhausen*, That so they might mutually consult together what was best to be done: for you must know this Fryer was intimate with Fryer *Wenceslaus*, as having entered into the College at the same time; and, being also a young man, was weary of a Monastical life, as well as he.

Whilst these things were in consult, there happened a Solemn Disputation in the School of the Monastery; Where among other *Theses*, Fryer *Francis*, under a Moderator, was obliged to maintain, “*That Metals can not be transmuted*”: And it chanced to be the turn of *Fryer Wenceslaus* to be the then Opponent: But, as he had made no great proficiency in his studies, so *Fryer Francis* easily baffled him, and exposed him to the laughter of the Auditory; so that in a great passion he

broke out into these Words, "*Why do you laugh? I can practically demonstrate the thing to be true?*" To whom the Moderator with great indignation, answered, "*Hold thy peace, thou Ass, wilt thou also be an Alchemist? I shall sooner be able to turn thee into an Ox, than thou to transmute the Metals*". Herewith Fryer Wenceslaus's mouth was stopped.

When the disputation was over, *Fryer Wenceslaus* took occasion to confer with *Fryer Francis*; when they two were alone together in the garden belonging to the Monastery, *Fryer Francis* thus accosted him, "*You have this day publicly affirmed in the Disputation, that you were able to transmute Metals; 'Twas unadvisedly spoken of you, whether it be true or false; if it be true, and it come to the Abbot's ear, you will not enjoy your liberty very long: Besides, there is a great muttering in the Monastery, that the old Father and your self, found a treasure in the Church, and, that the masons saw a copper box, and that a Monk of the Augustine Order sold some gold to a goldsmith, and that you did take from the kitchen a pewter plate; Moreover, the sudden death of the old Father is not without some suspicion; and although you may allege, That the money was sent you by your friends, and it were true, that they did send you some, yet it being probable that some came another way, for which and other reflections, you would never escape scot-free out of the Monastery, 'twas well the Moderator took you for a Buffle-head. But, if what you have affirmed be false, you do ill again that way, by asserting that which you are not able to demonstrate. I do therefore earnestly desire you to declare unto me, as to your intimate friend, the whole truth of this matter.*"

Whereupon *Fryer Wenceslaus* fell down at his feet, humbly beseeching him to swear not to discover what he should reveal to him, but to afford him his help and assistance, and then he would disclose that to him, which, upon their stealing away from the Monastery, would procure great wealth to them both, and advance them to high dignities; and that they would equally share the happiness between them, and run alike hazard in all things. In a word, the bargain was soon made, and they without loss of time, went into *Fryer Francis's* cell, where they took their mutual oaths one to another. Then *Fryer Wenceslaus* declared the whole intrigue and the procedure thereof to *Fryer Francis*, withal desiring him upon the first occasion to go into the city to buy there a pound of Lead, which being brought to him, he changed it into gold, observing the method the old Father had observed before: The transmuted gold was carried back by *Fryer Francis* into the city, and there sold to a Jew, for an 100 Ducats, though it were worth more, his pretence was as the former, that it was melted down out of ancient Coin and Medals. Having received this money, and thus made a strict league and friendship with *Fryer Francis*, and the Art being now found true for the second time, they were more intent upon their design of escaping out of the Monastery.

But that which retarded their resolution, was the season of the year, it being then winter; and a very hard one too, for they well understood, that they could not then safely take so long a journey as they were to undergo, if they would by their flight elude the search, (which would be made without doubt with all diligence possible after them) and avoid the punishment usually inflicted upon such an occasion. Hereupon they thought it more convenient to defer their intended flight till the spring following, and they were the rather induced thereunto because they had found means to pass that time merrily, by getting now and then a cup of wine,



and a couple of roasted pullets, which *Fryer Francis* (who was well versed in that trade) knew well how to get, and to convey into their chamber. But because *Fryer Wenceslaus* had as great a mind to taste of women's flesh as of that of poultry: and had lighted on a certain *Austrian* drab fit for his purpose, he caused therefore some mans apparel, with a periwig, and suitable cccoutrements to be made ready for her.

Having thus disguised her sex, they gave her the name of *Seignior Anastasio*, and she came often to the Monastery, on pretence, that she came from *Vienna*, to visit her cousin *Fryer Wenceslaus*, pretending he was her kinsman; this lasted a while, but the visits of this *Seignior Anastasio* was so frequent, that at last, he was observed to come into the Monastery sometimes, and not to go out again, by reason of his staying all night in the cell of *Fryer Wenceslaus*, who did thus live for some weeks in dishonest love with him: and, when he went either to the School or to the Church, he always carefully carried his key with him.

But a matter of that nature could be kept close no longer; some rumour of it came to the ear of the Abbot or Prior, so that one morning as *Fryer Wenceslaus* was at Mattens before day, The Abbot demanded of him the key of his cell, which he was forced to deliver, (but how willingly, any one may guess.) The Abbot immediately, with the Prior, and some other Monks went to his Cell and there *found Seignior Anastasio* naked in the Bed.

At this sight there was a general consternation on all sides, none knew what course to take, *Fryer Wenceslaus* his mind was more in his chamber than in the chapel chanting out his Mattens; as for *Seignior Anastasio*, she was doubtless as much at a loss; for, to run without her clothes out of the bed before such venerable company, was no ways thought convenient, and, as for the good prelates, they were also uncertain how to steer; some advised to declare the matter to the Magistrate, that so *Anastasio* might be thrust out of the house by the secular power; others feared, that if they took that course, they should derogate from their rights and privileges; and, if *Seignior Anastasio* should chance to be whipped, and to be put into the stocks for dissembling her sex, the noise of such a thing would affix an indelible character of infamy upon their Monastery.

After some deliberation, they concluded, that presently *Anastasio* should put on her clothes, and, after a severe reprehension, should be ejected out of the house, in the morning before day. And, as for *Fryer Wenceslaus* he was called from Mattens, and shut up in his cell, the doors being well bolted and barred on the outside, until four walls were prepared to enclose him, which were already built, only something was defective in the door, which was supplied the next day.

Whilst this was a doing, *Fryer Wenceslaus* found opportunity to secure his Copper Box, and to gather together the powder, and by means of a rope to let them both down at a window to *Fryer Francis*, who staid there on purpose to receive them; and withal he conveyed down a letter to him, the contents whereof was, to desire the said *Fryer Francis* not to forsake him in his distress, but to use his utmost endeavour to contrive a way for his deliverance, withal minding him not to violate his oath about the powder, but to keep it safe, for as yet, to his great comfort, it was entire.

The next day, *Fryer Wenceslaus* was kept fasting, and in the evening his back was scourged with many cruel lashes, and afterwards he was shut up close within four walls, and for a month fed with nothing but bread and water; during which time, the severity of the stripes he underwent. The disaster of *Seignior Anastasio*, and the hazard of the loss of his powder did so afflict him, that he was even ready to despair; but this did somewhat relieve him, that he carried a string with him into the dungeon, and casting it out at the hole, received sometimes both letters and victuals from his comrade *Fryer Francis*: and indeed the desperate condition of *Fryer Wenceslaus* did so affect his heart, that he bent all his endeavour to excogitate ways how to free him; at last an happy opportunity offered it self upon this occasion.

Prince *Charles* of *Lichtenstein* was a great favourer of Chemistry, and he had a Steward of his house at *Brno*, to whose friendship *Fryer Francis* had insinuated himself, and by him sent a letter and some of the foresaid powder to the Prince, in which he related the lamentable condition of *Fryer Wenceslaus*, and implored his aid for his deliverance.

The Steward having sent the letter, and going to *Valtice* the Prince's seat, was scarce arrived but that the Prince bestowed upon him a more profitable office than that which he had before, and this message concerning *Fryer Wenceslaus* was so favorably received, that he strictly enjoined him to return speedily to *Brno*, and to assist *Fryer Francis* to the utmost in order to the deliverance of *Fryer Wenceslaus*. And to that purpose he committed his own Seal to his Custody, to be made use of for that end, if there were occasion.

Thus the Steward returning home, did presently consult with *Fryer Francis* to deliver *Fryer Wenceslaus*; and being delivered from his prison and cloister, to hide and shelter him a while in the house of his master the said Prince of *Lichtenstein*: until some convenient opportunity could be found for his passage out of the town, and for his conveyance to the Prince of *Valtice*. In order whereto *Fryer Francis* took care to provide a false key, fit to open the dungeon, which he more easily did, because the padlock was on the outside of the door: and on a certain day, when Mattens were ended, he brought his project to its desired effect, for he opened the door, and took out *Fryer Wenceslaus*, locking the door again; and disguising him with a cloak, coat, and periwig which he had prepared for that purpose, he conveyed him through a by-gate in the garden of the Monastery, to *Lichtenstein's* House, where he shut him up in a chamber, locked the door, and sealed it up in two places with the Prince's seal and a label appendant.

The next day when the Monastery's Porter, according to his custom, was carrying his bread and water, about noon, to *Fryer Wenceslaus*, Lo, he was not to be found! Whereupon a great tumult was raised in the Monastery, and from thence the news flew to the *Count de Collebrat*, Governor of that Precinct, who presently commanded the gates to be shut, and search to be made in all houses, not excepting *Lichtenstein's* house it self. When they had diligently searched every corner of this latter house, at last they came to the chamber that was sealed up: Here the Steward of the house interposed, and told them, that room was the closet of the Prince, which he had sealed up himself with his Seal, and therefore, it could not be opened without great danger and hazard of incurring his high displeasure.

Whereupon they desisted; and *Fryer Wenceslaus* remained hid there for some weeks, until at length he found means, in a disguise to escape out of the town in the morning early, at the very first opening of the gates, and so was conveyed, with other officers, in the Prince's coach, to *Valtice*. Being arrived there, he was courteously received and well treated by the Prince, before whom he made a notable demonstration of his Art.

But the Prince soon found, that a man in his circumstances and of his abilities, could not be long concealed in his court, because the Abbot of *Brno* having sent spies after him, would certainly find him out, and would also obtain a mandate from the supreme Consistory at *Vienna* concerning him. Whereupon (though, as some think, the Prince's intent was to gain the whole tincture from him) he advised him to go to *Rome*, and there obtain a full discharge from his Monastical life, and to secure himself from the Abbot, which favour he proffered to obtain for him by means of his agent there. To accommodate him for his Journey, he gave him a Bill of Exchange for 1000 Ducats, and withal provided an Italian, his Chamberlain, to bear him company on his way.

But you must know *Fryer Wenceslaus* had sent away his comrade *Fryer Francis* (who privately had made an escape) to *Vienna* with the tincture enjoining him to get him a private lodging there, to abscond himself for a while, till he could commodiously contrive his journey to *Rome*.

Soon after the *Italian* Chamberlain and he began their journey, and when they were about half a days journey from *Vienna*, the Chamberlain on a sudden picked a quarrel with him, and holding a pistol to his breast, threatened to kill him, unless he would deliver him the tincture.

*Fryer Wenceslaus* being thus unexpectedly assaulted, was much abashed, and calling God to witness, protested, that the tincture was not, for the present, in his hands, but that he had sent it before by his companion *Fryer Francis* to *Vienna* whom the said Chamberlain had himself seen to undertake that journey a few days before.

The Chamberlain was the rather induced to believe his asseveration, because upon search both of him and his portmanteau, he found nothing at all of the tincture therein. Hereupon, they came to terms between them, *Fryer Wenceslaus* was to give the Chamberlain 100 Ducats, and an amnesty to be for their sudden falling out, and so they agreed and bid one another, Farewell.

The Chamberlain, being a covetous *Italian*, was glad of the money, and *Fryer Wenceslaus* was glad to be rid of him, having escaped such an hazard, and being now likely to attain *Vienna*, where he arrived in the evening of the same day, and told his companion *Fryer Francis* what had happened to him in every circumstance, upon the way. He being a subtle man, did easily perceive by his relation, what was the mystery of his designed journey to *Rome*, and that his Bill of Exchange was but a mere collusion, whereupon they both resolved to take another course for their safety, in order whereto, by means of a Saxon whose name was *Gorits*, a crafty fellow, and a Clerk in the Chancery of *Bohemia*, they came acquainted with one *Count Schlick*, a person of great sagacity, then living at *Vienna*, a great Favourer of Chemistry, but had lately received some affronts from

the Court, he was very glad of their acquaintance, and presently took *Fryer Wenceslaus* into his protection, and brought him to his house, where he made some trials, and withal gave him some of the tincture, that he himself might make one.

But as for *Fryer Francis*, he always lodged abroad. After some weeks, *Count Schlick* told *Fryer Wenceslaus*, that he could no longer secure him after that rate at *Vienna*, for both the Clergy and also the Prince of *Lichtenstein*, had an ill eye upon him, for his sake (being already disfavoured at Court), he should run a further hazard, by concealing of him nevertheless he would show him what courtesy he could, and if he pleased, he would send him to one of his own country-houses and castles in *Bohemia*, where he might remain in greater security. Accordingly he prepared all things for the journey. *Fryer Wenceslaus* did easily perceive the intention of the Count, for before he had observed, that the Count's footmen did observe him as narrowly as the Monks had done in the Monastery, and therefore perceiving what was to be done with him, he made his escape through an arch in the wine cellar, built after the *Italian* fashion, the day before he was to go to *Bohemia* (a place designed for his perpetual imprisonment) and retired to the lodging of his friend *Fryer Francis*, to whom having related what had happened to him again, upon deliberation they both agreed to extricate themselves out of all these hazards, and to acquaint the Emperor with the whole matter.

And to introduce them into his presence, they knew none more fit than a Spanish Count called *de Paar* (whose Brother named *Peter*, was *Hereditary* Post master, in the Emperors Hereditary Country) he was a great Alchemist, a factious and seditious man, and one much troubled with the Gout, yet he had found means to creep into the Emperors favour: therefore this gain unlooked for was no less acceptable to him, than to the others before, for he had heard a great while before of *Fryer Wenceslaus*, and had an extreme passion to be acquainted with him, and fancied that he should see strange things in him, as King *Herod* did of Christ, whose first, he acted the part cunningly enough, as you shall presently hear. They agreed together, that *Fryer Wenceslaus* should abide *incognito* at his house, where he was as much observed as at the house of Count *Schtick*.

Here he made another small trial, whereupon Count *Paar* went to the Emperor, and discovered to him the whole business. But his Imperial Majesty who (by reason of the great and weighty concerns of the Empire, doth not only not much regard or value learning, as his Father did, except what contributes to his recreation, as plays, music and the like, but also had a particular averseness from Alchemy, holding that for a mere imposter, which did cost his Royal Father and his Uncle the Arch-Duke *Leopold*, so much expense, both of money and time) gave no great heed to the proposition made by Count *Paar*, especially it having been related to him, that this *Fryer Wenceslaus* was a fugitive Monk, and had led a dissolute life; and moreover by report was accused of Magic.

The Spanish *Count Paar* having heard this repartee of the Emperor, being a subtle man, and easily foreseeing those objections would be made, had armed himself against them: upon which he thus replied to his Imperial Majesty that, "*I do confess, that there was a great weight in all the objections made by your Majesty, yet without presuming, being so means a person, to impose upon your*

*Imperial Majesty, it seemed to me, that though the case were extraordinary, yet nevertheless the dictates of common reason were to be obeyed, which doth advise sometimes to consider of things, abstracted from the persons they concern, it being evident, that some men though ill in themselves yet have been the authors of useful inventions, of which truth, instances might be given near at hand, in regard your Imperial Majesty having many notable inventions in your Archives, which owed their originals to bad men, yea, some of them accused of the same miscarriages as Fryer Wenceslaus, and since it is true, that some good things are done by some bad men; it being no less true, that all men are sinners, must we therefore reject all their laudable inventions and all the good works they do. A notable example whereof (proceeded he) lies as yet fresh before your Majesty, Giuseppe Borri was accused of Heresy, and being taken at Vienna, was sent to Rome [Editor's note: in 1670, see Appendix 1], but after Penance, he was pardoned upon the score of his knowledge, rather than of his person, and the Germans his accusers were by this means deceived; of which I my self (says he) at that time being Borri his commissary at Vienna, did forewarn them, but in vain. Your Majesty (said he farther) is a person, with whom God seems to deal after a peculiar manner, having wonderfully delivered you from many imminent dangers, and now in these necessitous and indigent times, cruel wars being also in prospect, your Hereditary Countries being also exhausted, the divine bounty seems to offer you a mean and way how you may most pity and spare your subjects: It is the Devil's policy to cast suspicion upon all extraordinary assistances, that so he may make them useless; but (says he) it is as great a Sin not to accept of things when offered, as to abuse them when they are accepted. As for my self (saith he) I have no great reason to be a friend to Chemistry, having suffered so much less by it, as your Imperial Majesty well knows, neither did I ever find any truth in the Art, save only in this powder of Fryer Wenceslaus, and the transmutation made thereby."*

*As in reference to that trial, he dared pawn his credit it would succeed; "And if your Majesty would not believe my word, yet you might depute some persons to see a trial made; for your part, I thought I was bound in conscience to discover the whole business to your Majesty, referring it wholly to you, whether you would graciously accept the proposal and protect the person that made it, or else discard them both; still hoping nevertheless, that your Majesty would not take his good intention in ill part, nor exclude my self from your Favour; wishing for a conclusion, that you would cause one trial to be made under the inspection of some persons; unprejudiced, that so your Imperial Majesty might be satisfied, at least in this one thing, that I had not made the proposition to you without sufficient reason", thus he concluded his harangue.*

The Emperor, as he is gracious to all Suitors, so he gave favourable attention to the Count's discourse, and commended him for it, "Only (says he to the Count) Alchemy is a subtle imposture, and though you your self may mean honestly, yet perhaps you also may be deceived thereby, otherwise I do not (adds he) at all despise the wonderful works of God, but do highly value them, and accept of his gift with all hearty thankfulness, and I do well know how long my Father took very great pains in that Art; and how highly he prized that little which was showed him by the Baron *Chaos*, and rewarded him for it; besides, I know full well how to make a distinction between the Art, and the life of its Professors."

Only least he should expose himself, and show himself too easy, he gave the Count order to make another trial, and to procure the presence of other skilful persons both of the Clergy and Laity: That so he might make him a more exact

relation of the matter with all the circumstance, and receive further order of his Majesty concerning it.

Count *Paar* being returned home from his audience: The very same day he sent to *Father Spies* and *Dr. Becher* to invite them to dine with him the next day, adding these words in his message, *that he "had a business to communicate to them from the Emperor"*. The next day, they all accordingly met. *Fryer Wenceslaus* being present, where after dinner Count *Paar* made known his commission, and forthwith caused an ounce of *Schlachenwald* Tin, and a new crucible to be bought, which materials being prepared and tried, and for fear of enchantment, *out of abundant caution ex abundantis cantesa*: sprinkled with Holy water: The trial began and was finished within a quarter of an hour, one part tinged, ten thousand parts into Gold, which was so graduated by the tincture, that it was almost friable, and was striated and distinguished with red veins interspersed, of which, as likewise of the Tin before it was tinged, both the *Count de Paar*, *Father Spies*, and *Dr. Becher*, each of them took a little piece for a perpetual memorial of the thing. The rest was sealed up with their three Seals, and the same quantity of the powder as this projection was made with was enclosed with it, and all three subscribed to the thing.

The next day, *Count Paar* went to his Imperial Majesty, and delivered it to him, making also a full relation of all the particular circumstances in the trial.

Hereupon the Emperor enjoined him to treat *Fryer Wenceslaus* kindly, and to assure him of his favour, moreover advising him to refrain his ill and scandalous life, and to satisfy the Clergy, that he would reassume the Monastical Habit, and for the rest he would take care; and till he had enquired further into the thing, he would for his security send him into some private place.

The Count returned home very joyful with this commission and the very same evening he caused *Fryer Wenceslaus* to be re-vested with his Monk's Habit by two English Fathers of the *Augustine* Order, *Father Dunoll* and *Father Vostaller*: A letter was also writ to his Abbot at *Brno*, informing him, that he might set his mind at rest concerning him, because he had laid aside his Monk's habit, and clothed himself with other apparel, for no other reason, but because he would free himself from the hardship of a prison, and make a journey to *Vienna*, to discover a great secret, which he had, to his Imperial Majesty, which being now done, he had again resumed his Monk's habit.

All this was done to persuade him, that they meant him nothing but good, to make him call again for all the tincture from his comrade, and to keep him from conversing any longer with those which before were his most intimate acquaintance, as counting himself sufficiently secured against all violence, by the Emperor's protection, and his Monk's Habit: So that *Count Paar* was as a father to him, and he, on the other side, as his adopted son. These two new friends undertook a voyage together, to a Country-house of the Count's (adjoining to a certain Lake), which he had in *Hungary*, distant about a days journey from *Vienna*.

Being come thither, the very same night they two being alone in a chamber, the Count plucked out a Decree of the Emperor's (as he pretended) which was sealed

up, adding these words, *“My Son, into what gulf of misery art thou cast? Here I have a Command in writing from the Emperor, to demand the tincture of thee, and if thou refuse to deliver it, then to my great grief, I must execute upon thee the sentence contained in this sealed Decree.”*

*Fryer Wenceslaus* desired to read the Decree; but the Count replied, *“if it were opened, it must be immediately executed!”* And, withal plucking a pistol out of his pocket, he directed it to his breast, sighing, and breaking forth in these words, *“into what miseries are we both cast! Yet notwithstanding if thou wilt harken to my counsel, (from whence thou may gather my love and fatherly care, and free both of us from this great misfortune, and make our condition very happy) I will give it to thee.”*

*Nothing was more grateful to Fryer Wenceslaus than to hear this condition, and having given him his hand that he would follow it:*

*The Count began thus, “Tis certain (said he) that you and I do both stand in need of the Emperor’s protection, and ’tis as certain, that we shall be forced to deliver the tincture to him. My Advice then is, (which I refer to you for your approbation and consent.) I will pretend, that being enjoined to make a stricter examination of this tingeing powder, that I have employed it all, in order to its multiplication, to try whether it might be augmented for the greater benefit and advantage of his Majesty. However, we may both be sheltered under the continuance of the Emperor’s protection, and yet we may keep the tincture; And after the time designed for its augmentation is elapsed, we will easily devise some colorable excuse, to evade it; as, that the glass was broken, or some error committed in the operation. For, the truth is, (said he) the Emperor’s Court is not worthy so great a treasure; it will be prostituted there and made common. But to engage they self to me in a greater degree of faithfulness, thou must not refuse to give me half the tincture, and we will take a mutual oath to be faithful one to the other, as long as we live, and for what now hath passed between us, it shall be buried in perpetual oblivion. The Emperor shall never know any thing of it; neither shall he ever have any of the Tincture.”*

*Fryer Wenceslaus* was fain to make an agreement on those terms, which were drawn up in writing, subscribed with both their hands, and confirmed by their mutual oaths; and so the tincture was divided between them. The Count made a trial by himself alone the next day, with some of his proportion thereof, to try whether he had not been deceived therein: but he found it right and good.

Having staid a while at this country house, he was about to return to *Vienna*; but he was taken so grievously sick of a fit of the Gout, that out of the intolerable torment which he felt, he drank some *Aurum Potabile*, which *Borri* had given him heretofore; but with this caution, that *“it was not yet perfect”*. Having tasted a few drops thereof, he presently felt a most grievous and vehement pain in his joints, so that he could hardly perform his journey with *Fryer Wenceslaus* to *Vienna*. But the first night after his coming, he was so afflicted with heat that all his entrails seemed to be on a flame as he complained himself. The day following his Physician, the Son of *Dr. Sorbat*, whose name was *Kreisset*, who was also Physician to the Emperors Army was sent for, who considering his present condition, applied the proper remedies best he could, which availed him nothing,

but bad symptoms did so grow upon him, that the third day his case was judged desperate.

The Count himself also being sensible of his death approaching, caused his brother the Master of the Post-Office to the Emperor, Count *Peter de Paar*, his only heir, (for the sick brother was a bachelor) to be sent for about night: to whom he spoke in these words,

*"It was foretold to me heretofore in Italy, that I should obtain the Tincture, and, that soon after I should die! The first part of the prophecy is fulfilled, and the latter is near at hand to be accomplished; I know, that you have bestowed as much time and expense in this Art as my self; I have nothing more valuable to leave you, and which, nothing can be more acceptable to you, than a notable portion of tincture, which I have sealed up in this desk, and shall entrust it in the hand of my confessor, who upon my decease, shall deliver it to you."*

After which words, he delivered the desk to his confessor, who was present and heard him speak them. Count *Peter* not imagining his brother was so near his end, took his leave of him for that night, and rode home, because it was very late. And his brother soon after departing this life, his confessor also took coach, and went home to the Monastery of *St. Francis*, not far distant from the Imperial Post Office at *Vienna*. The death of the deceased count was signified to his brother by his footmen who had accompanied the confessor home.

The Count immediately rose out of his bed, being but newly entered there into, and clothing himself, galloped at two of the clock in the morning, to the Monastery of the Franciscans, and, after he had knocked fiercely at the gate for admittance, the drowsy Porter arose and let him in; the Count desired to be admitted to the speech of the confessor of his newly deceased brother, but it was replied, *"It was an unseasonable time for such a visit, in regard the old man was weak, and weary, and being newly returned home, was laid down to rest."* The Count was not satisfied with this answer, but was very earnest with the Porter to accompany him and some of his attendants to the old Father's cell: he making excuses, the Count rushed in presently himself, and awaked him, demanding the desk which his brother had deposited in his hands, as now rightfully belonging unto him.

The Father was much surprized at his sudden irruption and demand: which he did the more suspect, because it was made at such an unseasonable time of the night: whereupon he desired the Count to hold himself contented till the morning, and then he should have the desk delivered unto him without fail, only he desired to deliver it in before the Father Guardian, and that he would then give him his acquaintance for the receipt thereof. The Count, not content with this answer, by the help of his attendants and servants, endeavored to get it from him by force.

Whereupon a tumult arose; the Watch was sent for, the Monks were also gathered together, and a Spanish Bishop of the same Order, the confessor of the Empress *Margaret*, then lodging in the Monastery, was also roused out of his sleep, who hearing such a tumultuous noise in the Monastery, a privileged place, was so much concerned thereat that he enquired into the occasion, whilst the Count was yet present, and understanding that it arose upon the score of a sealed desk. He demanded it of the Father who had it in keeping: which having received



from him, the next morning he carried it with him to the Emperor, and complained grievously against the Count, as being the occasion of that nights uproar. In the mean time, as soon as it was day, the noise hereof was spread all over the city: and among the rest it reached the ears of *Fryer Wenceslaus*, who presently hastened to Court, and by means of the Empress's confessor obtaining audience, he related to the Emperor the whole story how the Count had used him in *Hungary*, how he had extorted from him half the tincture, how he was necessitated by a forced agreement, not to discover any thing hereof whilst he was living, but was now free from the obligation of his oath by the Count's death, that he was very glad that the tincture was at length come into the hands of the right owner his Imperial Majesty, for whom he had long before designed it; he did therefore now implore nothing more of his Imperial Majesty, but that he would afford him his protection, against the violence of *Count Peter Paar*, his Post-master, and his adherents.

The Emperor perceiving the wonderful series of this affair, presently entertained *Fryer Wenceslaus* at his court, and committed him to the care and inspection of *Count Wallerstein*, the Imperial Governor of *Hartschier*.

About this time, the Post-master above-mentioned died also. *Fryer Wenceslaus* being thus received into the Emperor's protection, had his lodgings assigned him by the Imperial bowling-green, where he made some trials before the Emperor and Count *Austin* of *Wallerstein* his Guardian, and in the Palace of the *Johannites* in the *Carinthian*-street, he made one of 15 Marks, as they say, out of which transmutations the *Count Wallerstein* made him a gold chain, to keep in perpetual memory of the thing. Moreover he did deposit some of his tincture in the Court, for augmentation, and, as far as I can judge, by the process delivered to me, he had a great desire to get the Mercury of Silver, how far he proceeded in it, I do not certainly know, but some affirm, that he made some progress therein.

In the mean time he both desired to be acquainted with some noted Chemists and eminent Artists, and several imposters and sophisters intruded themselves into his acquaintance, so that from thence resulted very frequent junketing, drinking and merry meetings, and many foolish trifling processes wrought by him; from whence *Fryer Wenceslaus* learned rather several cunning and subtle impostures, than any real augmentation of his powder: But the noise and multitude of so many importunate visitants, being cumbersome at Court, where *Fryer Wenceslaus* had his Diet, under the severe inspection of *Count Wallerstein*, he thereupon pretended, that he had occasion to make some sorts of *Aqua Forts* and other *Menstruums*, which would be dangerous to the whole Court, and cause such noisome fumes and odious smells, that they could not safely be prepared in that place; therefore a laboratory was built for him, in the *Carinthian* Fort, where the Emperor's Chief Engineer did dwell, his name was *Fischer*, a great lover of Alchemy, and who showed himself very officious to him, assisting him to build strange and most nonsensical furnaces which can ever be seen; and besides being not a little pleased with his good fortune of the neighborhood and acquaintance of the owner of so rich a tincture; but this intimacy lasted not long, as the event soon made appear: for when *Fryer Wenceslaus* had scarcely well fixed his habitation, and settled his things in order, the Engineer was forced to leave the splendid dwelling there assigned him by the Emperor, and to go to *Györ* in *Hungary*, to

dwell there, his wife also, as some give out, being vitiated into the bargain; *Fryer Wenceslaus* also fell very sick, and he that waited upon him in his chamber died suddenly, not without some suspicion of poison, and he himself also lay without any hopes of recovery, in this case *J. A. C. P. C. L. de S.* who before had bought some of the tincture of him, and had paid him for it a thousand Ducats, designing to take this opportunity of his illness, and decease so apparent, and so to get and enjoy his tincture without money, sent to him one *Biliot*, a French Physician, to steal from him, under pretence of a visit, both the said thousand Ducats, and the rest of the tincture. Fortune did favour him as to the first part of his Design, but in the latter she did fail and disappoint him, for *Fryer Wenceslaus* had hid his tincture more carefully than his thousand Ducats: at last, the sick man, contrary to all men's expectations began to recover, and *Fryer Francis* who was sent to *Rome* to obtain a dispensation for him, to absolve him from his vow, having obtained the same returned home; whereupon presently *Fryer Wenceslaus* laying aside his Monks Habit, took a wife and was married publicly to one named *Angerlee*, who had ministered to him in his sickness, and had otherwise been very assistant to him when he wanted her; she was a very subtle and crafty woman, yet accounted at *Vienna* but little better than a common harlot, and she was the worse thought on, because her sister had been naught with *B. D. L.* and by his advice and assistance had caused her husband to be made away, for which fact, he the said *B. D. L.* was sentenced to death: but, though afterwards pardoned by the Emperor, yet was deprived of all his dignities, degraded of his nobility, and cast into perpetual prison in the Citadel of Grätz [note: Grodzisk Wielkopolski, Poland], where he dyed miserably; and his whore, *Fryer Wenceslaus's* wives Sister, was the same day to be beheaded in open Court, before the Judgment Hall, the scaffold and all the rest being already prepared, but by the intercession of the wife of *Castell Rodrigo*, the Spanish Ambassador she was set free, yet afterward, upon the account of her lewd life, and dishonest practices, she was killed with a pistol-shot.

*Fryer Wenceslaus* being linked by marriage into such a family did then fancy for a time, that all the elements did conspire together to make him happy: for why? He was visited by persons of the highest rank, and withal was mightily respected by the most eminent Ladies, Countesses and Princesses: As for me, as spectator of this scene, I considered him in this fool's paradise: Whilst it put me in mind of *Cornelius Agrippa*, who, in his book of the *Vanity of Sciences*, under the title of Alchemy, says, "if ever he should be Master of the Tincture, he would spend it all in nothing but in whoring"; for women being naturally covetous, he could thereby easily make them to prostitute themselves, and to yield unto his Lust.

And it seems that not only *Fryer Wenceslaus* was so mighty a proficient and so stout a soldier in the school of Venus, that he was brought very low by the French Disease [note: syphilis], but also that his wife *Angerlee* died of it. After whose decease *Fryer Wenceslaus* exceeded all Bounds of honest modesty, and daily let loose the reins to all sinful and voluptuous excesses: for from that time he had obtained the tincture, he spent in two or three years time more than ten Myriads of Crowns, in all manner of Luxury: and he foresaw well enough, that it could not last and subsist long at that rate: for the tincture would not maintain him. And to turn it into Gold, or sell it for a small price would turn to no account, as he had always hoped it would by augmentation, and thereby to gain an inexhaustible treasure.

But on the one hand, his want and necessity was such, and on the other hand, the soliciting of those who would buy of his powder, were so importunate that he could not resist so great temptations: And therefore between both, he resolved upon a dishonest shift, which was to sell for great rates, *powdered cinnabar, red lead, and the Caput Mortuum of Aqua fortis boiled*, and such other ingredients in stead of the true powder, mixing also therewith some few filings of Copper, that foolish ignorant people might mistake the same for a Gold-making powder: to some he sold it without any such cozening addition as Copper: And if they were not able to tinge with it, he would lay the blame on their impatience and unskillfulness in making the projection. To others, he pawned some of his counterfeit tincture for a great sum of money, which he pretended, he had a present use for: but he was loath to spend his tincture in projecting, because he hoped to augment it with a thousand-fold advantage: And that they might see the tincture was genuine and true, he took some of it and wrapped it up in a little wax, with which he mingled a little of his right tincture, which he called his *Crocus*, or powder of reduction, and so tinged therewith.

By this means he got very many 1000's of Crowns, and over and above he got P. C. de L. and C. L. to be his assistants and partners in these mysteries. But the impudent sort, among which A. C. P. and his Cousin C. B. are to be reckoned, he gave them whole ingots which he had cast, consisting of equal parts of Gold and Silver; then filing some of them, and dissolving it into common *Aqua forts*, which he brought with him, he affirmed that now his tincture was exalted into a menstruum, which would presently change Silver into Gold: and that as soon as ever the price or value which was to be paid for its purchase should be put thereto, it would be converted into Gold:

It hath been also further related to me, that he grew to that degree of impudence, as to tinge some sort of coins after this manner into Gold, before the *Empress Dowager* and the Emperor himself. Yea, this fellow was so arrogant, as to cause his own effigies to be drawn on some of those false coins, which he did attempt deceitfully to put off.

Yet this matter could not be kept so secret, but the more prudent began to smell the cheat, and to mutter something about it; which was very ill taken in the Emperor's Court. For he was in such credit there, that it was not safe to impeach him, as being received into the Emperor's protection, both against the Clergy and the secular power, and even against the skilful in the same Art. For great men are loath to acknowledge their error; but think themselves, though under a mistake, to be as infallible as the Pope himself.

Those who were not much concerned in the matter, suffered it so to pass, as taking little notice of it; but some true philosophers were very much aggrieved, that so in famous an impostor, after so many vows and protestations made by him to the contrary, and after such evident proofs of his former debauched Life, after so many villainous crimes committed, and his base prostitution openly of so noble an Art of Chemistry, should yet notwithstanding that he ranted it up and down in his Coach in masquerades, before the Emperor's Court, be maintained and protected by him. But others, who had been cozened by him of great sums of money, even to many thousand Ducats, with his adulterate tincture, could not so

rest satisfied, but brought in their action against him at common law: where, after some time and much expense, they obtained judgment against him, but it never was put in execution, though all other means were tried.

Now the Emperor, unless he would have left his favorite *Wenceslaus* to the jurisdiction and power of his judges, and rigor of the law, must needs interpose: for the complaints made against him for his insolent and abusive practices were so many, and the fame of them was spread so far abroad in the world, That his Imperial Majesty thought it more convenient to have the noise of it altogether suppressed.

To be short, the Emperor paid all his debts, and that he might prevent his farther opportunity of cosenage, he got from him the rest of his tincture, and then advanced him to the most Ancient Order of Barony in *Bohemia*, by the Title of *Baron Seyler of Seylerburgh*, and afterwards made him Hereditary Master of the Mint of *Bohemia*: and having thus preferred him, he sent him away from his Court to *Prague*, where he now lives very gallantly; and hath made *Fryer Francis* the Steward of his House: having married a second wife, called *Waldes Kircheriana*, a handsome woman, and of a noble family.

In the mean time, a rumor was spread all over *Germany*, that the Devil had carried him away Soul and Body. Which report, though it might have some good grounds, yet, for this time it was not true: but he hath very great reason to-fear that it may prove true, at last, if he doth not amend his life: and the event thereof we must expect.

I have described the series of this story both to vindicate the truth, and also to satisfy so many curious, who have despicable thoughts of Chemistry. If I have mistaken in any passage, *Fryer Wenceslaus* is yet alive, and I earnestly desire him to amend and rectify my mistakes, and to vindicate him, by giving the world a more exact account thereof, that he may no longer lie under any unjust reflection.

For a conclusion, I heartily wish, that if God should bless any lover of this noble Art, with some such like treasure, he would use it better than *Wenceslaus* hath done: for the glory of God, the benefit and advantage of his neighbour and the furtherance of his own everlasting salvation.

FINIS.

## Appendix 1: Errata's are thus corrected or notes added (2011)

*Mr. Boyl* now reads *Mr. Robert Boyle*, *Bruna/Brunn* (German) now reads *Brno* (Czech), *Felis-bourg/burge/burgh* (German) now reads *Valtice* (Czech) *Sack* now reads *Wine*, *Portmantle* now reads *Portmanteau*, all *Wenceslaus* are uniform, all *Fr. & F.* read *Fryer*, all capitals removed, all *~t* now *ed*, all *'d* now *ed*, *ex abundanti cantesa* now reads *out of abundant caution*, *Joseph Burrhi/Burrhus (Latinized)/Burrby* now reads *Giuseppe Borri (see Appendix 2)*, *Wallestein* now reads *Wallerstein*, *Javarin (Raab:German)* now reads *Győr* (Hungary), *Hatschirr* now reads *Hartschier*.

It is known that John Joachim Becher lived between 1635 - 1682. This account being published near the end of his life. As this text is a translation it is presumed that the original is of an earlier date. The incident of Borri in the Emperor's court is dated 1670, so the event of this series must have taken place sometime in the mid-1670's.

Of Wenceslaus's second wife, the *Bibliotheca Britannica; or the General Index of Foreign Literature... Volume II.* by Robert Watt, (London, 1824) lists two titles including her second name, Kircheriana:

KESTLER, Joan(m?). Steph. - *Physiologia Kircheriana Experimentalia*. Amst. 1680, fol. (This title is also attributed to KIRCHER, Athanasius (1602-1680). *Physiologia Kircheriana experimentalis, qua summa argumentorum multitudine & varietate*, edited by Johann Stephan Kestler. Amsterdam: Jan Waesberg, 1680. Additional engraved title, numerous woodcut and engraved illustrations.)

KUHLMANNUS, Quirinus, a celebrated Fanatic, was born at Breslaw, in Silesia, 1651; and burnt in Muscovy, 1689, on account of some seditious predictions

- *Prodromus quinquennii Mirablisi*, Leyd. 1674, svo.
- *Testimonia Humana. Heptaglotta Operum suorum Juvenilium, de Conversione Turearum. Mysterium 21 Septimanarum libus Naturae. De monarchia Jesuitica*, Kircheria. Lond. 1681-2, svo.

On 'Hatschirr':

In the book, *'Genealogisches Reichs- und Staats-Handbuch: auf d. Jahr..'* (Varrentrapp u. Wenner, 1799), appears the listing of *'Leibgarde der hatschier'* a list of the Bavarian residence guard or court bodyguards. In 1669, Ferdinand Maria, Elector of Bavaria (1636-1679) renamed the unit *'Hartschier-Garde'*.

Brno Augustinians

The Augustinians arrived in Brno in 1346, and John Henry of Luxemburg (Jan Jindřich Lucemburský), Margrave of Moravia, granted a Chapter, began the construction of their original cloister (built outside of the town walls, near the Rhine Gate due to lack of suitable space within the town) and set down their constitution in 1352. This unprotected complex required rebuilding (with the addition of defensive walls and tower) in the 1400's after being destroyed by Hussite raiders in 1424 and 1428. The conflict was the result of the Catholic Brno

resisting the religious reformation of the Hussites. In 1612 the Augustinian Prior was given the right of episcopal consecration and insignia. The monastery suffered heavy damage in 1643 and 1645 during the unsuccessful siege of the city by the Swedish army during the Thirty Years' War (1618 - 1648). What remains there is the Augustinian Thurn, founded in 1653 as a result of a substantial endowment from Sibylla Polyxena Francesca von Montani (Countess von Thurn und Walsassina) for the encouragement of music.

In 1653, the order was located in the Abbey of St. Thomas's (in present Moravian Place or Governor's Place, Brno), the stage of *Magnalia Naturae*. It displays a monumental façade from 1665-1675 construction. The present Baroque church replaced an earlier Gothic structure also damaged in the Thirty Years' War. The building was planned as a burial place of Moravian rulers, including the burial of Margrave Jobst (1351 - 1411). It housed the order from 1350 to 1780s. The order was forcibly moved in 1783 by order of Emperor Joseph II to *Staré Brno*, Old Brno Town; the site includes the Basilica of the Assumption of Our Lady (originally a Cistercian convent established in 1323 by the widow Queen, Eliška Rejčka).

Prince of Liechtenstein.

Karl II Eusebius (12 September 1611 - 5 April 1684) inherited the title from his father Karl I in 1627. As he was underage (16 years) his uncles Prince Gundakar and Prince Maximilian acted as regents until he was 21. He witnessed the Thirty Years' War and enthusiastically restored his dominions. His son Johann Adam Andreas (Hans-Adam I) succeeded him.

Charles Joseph, comte de Paar (1654-1725)

Joseph Ignace, comte de Paar (1660-1735). Actual Privy-Councillor of the Emperor and great Master of the Empress Dowager Amelia Wihimina's Court

John Adam Count de Paar, member of the Aulic Council, Lord of the Bed-Chamber to his Imperial and Catholic Majesty, and Postmaster-general.

Henri Schlick, comte de Passau (d. 1650).

Identity of 'J.A.C.P.C.L. de S.:  
Johann Adolf de Schwarzenberg (1615 - 1683)?

SEYLER was an English occupational name for a dancer or acrobat.

Jews in Brno

The Jewish community was expelled from the city Brno in 1454 by King Ladislav Pohrobek. They resettled in the Křenová Street District, potential the location of the gold sale.

## **Appendix 2:**

An extract from Thompson, Charles John Samuel, *"Poison mysteries in history, romance and crime"*. (Published by J.B. Lippincott, 1923).

### **Chapter XVII**

#### **A Mystery of the Austrian Court in the Seventeenth Century**

In the spring of the year 1670, Leopold I, Emperor of Austria, was seized with a mysterious illness which greatly puzzled his physicians. A staunch and fervent Roman Catholic he was completely dominated by the Jesuit party, who dubbed him "Leopold the Great," and received in return for their commendation many tokens of his favour. In spite of this friendship, however, seeing that the house of Austria was tottering, for Leopold had no male descendants, the fathers were engaged in secretly fomenting an insurrection in Hungary which was supported by Louis XIV.

It was darkly hinted by some that the Emperor was being poisoned by the Hungarian malcontents. One day the papal nuncio was in conference with the sick monarch in his cabinet concerning the insurrection which had just broken out, and while they were in consultation a fresh despatch arrived, which contained a long list of the persons implicated. In this list appeared the name of Francis Borri. As the name was read out by the secretary, the nuncio started:

"Borri!" he exclaimed. "Have him arrested at once, your Majesty. He is a most dangerous man and has contrived to escape from the avenging arm of the Holy Office." Within a few hours afterwards, a Captain Scotti, of the Austrian Life Guards, was despatched on a special mission to Goldingen to arrest him.

Giuseppe Francesco Borri was a remarkable man. Born in Milan in 1627, he left that city early in life for Rome, where he studied medicine and alchemy. His scientific studies did not, however, prevent him from taking a deep interest in other subjects, and among these theology claimed a place. His researches led him to doubt the supremacy of the Pope, and he began to deliver lectures claiming that the mysteries of the faith were derived from the principles of Chemistry.

The Jesuits at once obtained an order for his arrest through the Inquisition, and the Pope offered a reward of 35,000 francs to anyone who would deliver him up; but Borri was on the alert, and fled to Strasburg. His enemies in Rome, balked of their prey, meanwhile had his name publicly exposed on the gallows and his picture was burnt by the hangman. From Strasburg he journeyed to Amsterdam, and there became very popular as a physician, being designed by patients who offered him large fees for his services. He professed to be an adept in toxicology and was learned in poisons and their antidotes. Leaving Amsterdam, he proceeded to Hamburg, where he made the acquaintance of Queen Christina and acquired a great reputation for his skill in ophthalmic diseases. For a few months he lived at the court of Copenhagen, but desire coming over him to go to a warmer climate he left the north with the object settling in Stamboul.

On April 10, 1670, he arrived at Goldingen on the Silesian border. But his enemies the Jesuits had not lost sight of him. They played a waiting game, which proved successful in the end, for the landlord of the house in which Borri lodged communicated his guest's identity to the Jesuits at Vienna, and he was arrested as a suspect by Captain Scotti on April 22. Travelling in a carriage surrounded by an escort of cavalry they at once set out for the capital. The captain happened himself to be an Italian and treated his prisoner with every consideration. He told

him he was suspected of being concerned in a conspiracy, and that he had the papal nuncio among his opponents. "Then I realize the real cause of my arrest," replied Borri.

Scotti also told him, in conversation, of the Emperor's mysterious illness, which had baffled his physicians and which was now supposed to be due to secret poisoning. Borri expressed the opinion that if this was the case he could readily discover the presence of a poison if one existed. He implored the captain to inform the Emperor that if he really suspected he was being poisoned he could free him from it, and was incapable of taking any revenge for the insult done by arresting him. The captain promised to comply with his request.

On their arrival in Vienna on April 28, 1670. Borri was taken to the Swann Inn and there lodged in a room which was guarded by soldiers.

Weary and tired by his journey he at once threw himself on the bed and fell asleep. A man entered, wrapped in a cloak and bearing a dark lantern. When he lighted the room he saw it was Captain Scotti.

"Make haste and get ready," said the captain. "The Emperor wishes to speak with you, for your reputation as a physician is known to him. I mentioned your proposal to him and his Majesty trusts you, but was obliged to wait till night as he does not wish this visit to be known."

Borri thanked the captain and in a few minutes they were walking through the dark and silent streets to the palace. When they arrived, Scotti handed his prisoner over to a chamberlain, who at once conducted him to the Imperial antechamber and bade him be seated.

In about a quarter of an hour a gentleman of the bed-chamber came in and made Borri sign to follow him. They passed through several apartments until they came to a velvet-covered door which the conductor opened, and, drawing back a heavy portiere, beckoned Borri to enter.

He found himself in the Emperor's cabinet, a gloomy room lighted by a few candles which shed but a dim light. Pictures of a religious character covered the walls, and by the side of a small work-table stood a lofty prie-Dieu, over which hung a finely carved crucifix. By the dim light Borri at length discerned a little man seated in an arm-chair near the table, making impatient movements. He wore a green silk dressing gown and a cap with a shade for his eyes. His feet were wrapped up, his face was livid and his cheeks sunken.

Borri advanced and bowed.

"Are you the Milanese cavalier?" the Emperor asked in a trembling voice.

"At your Majesty's service," replied Borri.

"I am sorry to see you here as a prisoner, but you are not one at present," said the Emperor.

"Had I not been arrested I should not have had the happiness of seeing your Majesty," rejoined the physician.

"I hear much that is satisfactory about your learning, although in another respect you are said to be a dangerous man. Why do you trouble yourself with religious affairs? Leave them to the clergy," said the Emperor, who continued to interrogate him at some length on religious subjects. At last he said, "Now I hear that you devote yourself to medicine. What have you heard about my condition?"

"Nothing beyond the supposition that your Majesty has been poisoned," replied Borri. "But that I may be able to express my views on the subject your Majesty's physician-in-ordinary must bring the symptoms before me, and then I shall be able to speak with certainty," he continued.



A messenger was at once sent for the physician. Meanwhile, Borri noted the Emperor's wasted and grey looks. Then, rising, he took a survey of the room, examining every ornament and object and sniffed suspiciously. The Emperor followed his movements with inquiring eyes.

"Well, Borri," he sighed at length. "What do you think?"

"I think almost certainly," remarked the physician decisively, "that your Majesty has been poisoned."

"Holy Mother, have mercy on me!" cried the Emperor.

"I must, as I said, speak with your physician-in-ordinary," continued Borri, "but I can also promise your Majesty's recovery with equal certainty, for there is still time."

"And how do you come to this conclusion of poison? My friends dine with me out of the same dish. Do you notice anything on my body?"

"Your Majesty, it is not so much your body," replied Borri, "but the atmosphere of your room that is poisoned."

"How can you tell, when I feel nothing of it?"

"Your Majesty is too accustomed to the poisonous exhalation to notice it."

"And where does the exhalation come from?"

Borri rose, and, followed by the wondering eye of the Emperor, lifted each candelabrum and placed it on the table, before the monarch, and so bringing twelve lighted candles together.

"See the exhalation that rises from the candles," he exclaimed. "Do you not notice the peculiar colour of the flame?"

At this moment the chamberlain entered the room.

"The light is livid," remarked the Emperor, "but does not seem to me to be extraordinary."

"Do you not see a fine white mist arising which is not found in ordinary candles?" continued Borri.

The Emperor appealed to the chamberlain and asked of he noticed the mist, and he replied that he did. Just then the Emperor's physician-in-ordinary entered the cabinet.

"You have come at the right moment," exclaimed the Emperor. This cavalier asserts that the air of my room is poisoned. Have you the diagnosis with you?"

"It is here, your Majesty, where it has been kept since your illness," replied the physician.

The report was handed to Borri, who quickly glanced at it and nodded his head.

"Do you perceive the curious smell in the room and the fine, quickly ascending vapour?" asked Borri, as he pointed out the candles to the doctor. "Look also at the crust which the vapour has deposited on the ceiling."

"I see it all and how to your sharpness, cavalier," said the physician.

"Does your Majesty burn these candles everywhere?" Borri asked. "It would be interesting to know if they are used in the Empress's apartments?"

The chamberlain at once went and brought two lighted candles from the Empress's chamber, and placed them on the table near the suspected ones. The former burned clear and quietly, while the latter burned with a ruddy flame, emitting a thin vapour while repeated sparks with a crackling noise flashed from the wick.

"There is the cause of your sickness," exclaimed Borri, as he laid his hand on the Emperor's candelabra. "Shall I now prove to your Majesty that these impregnated with a subtle poison?"

"At once," replied the Emperor.

Borri immediately closed the door of the apartment and extinguished the suspected candles. With the physician's assistance he then commenced to remove all the wax from the wick. Meanwhile the chamberlain was summoned and commanded to bring all the candles he had into the Emperor's cabinet. The entire stock, amounting to thirty-five pounds, was brought from a cupboard in the anteroom where they had been stored and laid before Borri.

On examining them he called the Emperor's attention to the peculiar fact that each candle was specially marked with a gold fillet round the top as if to prevent any mistake. Further questioning revealed the fact that no other candles but these had been used in the Emperor's apartments since Candlemas. Borri next shredded the candlewick and calling for a small dish of meat carefully mixed the candlewick with it. A turnspit dog was then sent for, and was shut up in the cupboard with the dish of meat.

Meanwhile the Emperor was removed to another apartment, and Borri and the physician proceeded to the palace pharmacy to prepare an antidote for him. Here Borri tested the suspected candlewick and found, as he thought, it was impregnated with arsenic. He had left instructions that he was to be called as soon as the dog got restless, but the animal was found to be dead by the time he returned to the Emperor's cabinet.

The antidote prepared by Borri soon produced a beneficial effect on the Emperor, and his health improved so rapidly that within three weeks he was able to go out again.

An interesting record of Borri's examination of the poisoned articles shows his remarkable knowledge of chemistry; of the whole of the suspected candles brought to him he kept back two as evidence and used the remainder in his analysis. The weight of the candles was twenty-four pounds, and the impregnated wicks three and a half pounds, from which Borri concluded that nearly two and three-quarters pounds of arsenic had been employed.

Immediately Borri reported the result of his investigation to the Emperor he gave orders that the person who supplied the candles should be arrested at once.

It was found that they had been supplied by the procurator of the Jesuits, who was, however, no longer in Vienna and was not to be found. Being warned in time, this astute individual had made good his escape.

The solution of the mystery as to how the candles became impregnated with arsenic subsequently transpired. It was discovered that the pater-procurator of the Jesuits, accompanied by a humble member of the order, had personally delivered the prepared candles, which were packed in two boxes, at the palace on March 2, 1670, at dark, with instructions that they were to be delivered to the chamberlain and were to be treated with the greatest care.

"Your reverence," said the steward who received them, "will greatly oblige by telling me what the boxes contain, so that I may take due care of them, until I hand them over to the chamberlain on duty?"

"Learn, my friend," replied the procurator, "that the boxes contain a number of especially consecrated candles for use in the Imperial apartments. His Majesty, you know, receives everything he requires through the hands of us who have blessed it for his service. Inform the servants who have charge of the Imperial apartments that his Majesty gave his reverend confessor Father Muler to understand that he wished, in addition to other consecrated objects, to have such candles burnt in his rooms. They must be henceforth taken from this store."

The same evening the candles *consecrated* by the Jesuit fathers were lighted in the Imperial cabinet.

For a short time the Emperor appears to have shown some gratitude to the physician who had been instrumental in saving his life, and Borri dined at the Imperial table, but the hatred of the clerical party increased when they saw him thus favoured.

On June 14, 1670, the Emperor, now quite restored to health, summoned Borri to his cabinet and thanked him fervently for his services, but, he added, he was sorry in the matter of religion Borri had gone astray and that it was necessary to cure him of his errors. The Pope would appoint a Commission. "I have obtained a guarantee from the papal nuncio," continued the Emperor, "that in no case shall anything be done against your body or your life. So long as you live, two hundred ducats a year shall be paid to you by myself or my heirs as a memorial of what you have done for me."

On the following day Borri left under an escort for Rome. On his arrival he was arrested and imprisoned in the castle of St. Angelo. Owing to the good offices of the French Marechal D'Estrees, whom he attended during a serious illness, he was allowed a certain amount of liberty and could go in and out of the castle. He was also allowed to fit up a small laboratory, where he was able to carry on his work in chemistry. The Jesuit general Pater Gonzalez is said to have had several interviews with him while in St. Angelo, with the object of getting him to reveal the secret of his poison antidote, but Borri always declined to reveal it, and he eventually died in the castle of St. Angelo in the year 1695.

Borri has been variously described by his biographers as an alchemist, physician, quack or charlatan who amassed money by duping the wealthy patients who consulted him, but, judging from the works he wrote, he was probably no worse than many others who practiced medicine in his day, and certainly was before his time in his knowledge of chemistry.

Although a fanatic on religious subjects, he appears to have had considerably more knowledge of disease than many of his contemporaries, and the stories of his successful treatment in many cases are probably true. The story here related of his discovery of the causes of the Emperor Leopold's mysterious illness is related by Wraxall and vouched for by Michiel and is believed to be founded on fact.